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Issue # 253 Volume XXIII, No. 6 November 1998

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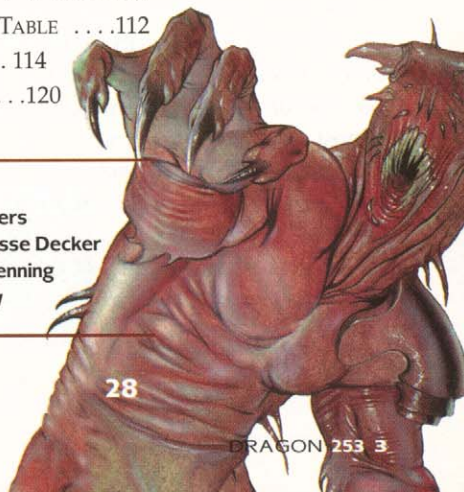

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On the Cover

The incomparable Brom offers a deceptively placid image for this month.

The Wyrm's Turn™

Little Heroes

The things that caught my eye at this year's Game Fair were the the molded halls, rooms, stairs, and other bits you combine to form a three-dimensional dungeon for your miniature figures. They made me nostalgic for roleplaying with miniatures. Being a big game goob, naturally I ordered a few sets. Chris and Jesse, equally goobish, insisted that we start playing a new campaign with miniatures and the new dungeon sets as soon as possible. We start next weekend, so yesterday I dug out my old miniatures. Over the years, I've accumulated thousands of the things, a few hundred painted passably well. They outnumber everything in my apartment except maybe comics and books. God help me if they ever turn against me.

Some think that using miniatures during a game interferes with the imagination, and they have a point. Just as with books, roleplaying without visual representations of the characters makes you work harder at envisioning your characters, their surroundings, and the creatures and NPCs they meet. In some circumstances, miniatures are actually counterproductive; it's hard to be frightened of a wraith unless you've got one heck of a scary miniature.

Still, using miniatures does a lot more than solve arguments about marching order. If you like combat modifiers for position or height, then miniatures are almost essential. When your heroes are facing a mob of goblins, wolves, or other opponents, miniatures can solve a lot of ambiguity about who's fighting whom, and whether there's room for the thief to slip behind the enemy for a backstab.

Best of all, the really great miniatures inspire the imagination, not short-circuit it. If you've ever created a character based partly on the looks of the miniature you wanted to use, then you know what I'm talking about. For the DM, finding a miniature that resembles no monster description you've ever seen can be the start of a delightful surprise for your overconfident players.

It's been years since we presented a miniatures column in these pages, and now and then we receive a letter asking that we bring one back.

As always, your wish is our command. A few issues from now, we'll start a new series of articles on using miniatures in your AD&D® (or ALTERNITY®) game. It'll be aimed mostly at those of you who've never used miniatures before but want to bring them into your game without breaking the bank or having to take an art class. We won't neglect the veterans, however; the articles will include useful new rules and strategy tips for both veteran miniatures enthusiasts as well as for those who'll never actually use minis in the game.

Until then, let's see how everyone is using their miniatures. Tell us how you use miniatures in your game, or even send us a few snapshots along with a note telling us whether you'd like us to print them along with your letter. Likewise, we'll keep you informed about our new campaign. I think it'll be great … as long as the players don't come to a closed door.

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Maximum Ed

I've been a reader for years and finally had occasion to write. I like seeing readers writing to critique issues, and naturally I'm writing to refute what's been said recently.

Back in issue #248, someone wrote in to say that they've had enough of Ed Greenwood's "Wyrms of the North." Had the editors listened we might not have gotten Nymmurh, Ed's wyrm for issue #250. This was by far the most interesting dragon we've seen yet! Ed Greenwood is a treasure, and I ask that virtues of the DARK SUN® setting.

I'll keep my piece as short as possible. I find DARK SUN a setting for advanced players and DMs that have "been there and done that" to all other worlds. The deadliness of the terrain is "tempered" by the deadliness of the political intrigue. Adventures nearly write themselves when you grasp the nature of the powers that pull Athas' strings. Naturally I ask for as many DARK SUN articles as you can find.

Richard Black
Courtice, Ontario

I ask that *DRAGON® Magazine* editors get as much of Ed in print as possible.

DRAGON® Magazine editors get as much of Ed in print as possible.

This brings me to make another comment I've been wanting to make. A few years ago, TSR began to lose key people to other gaming companies. Zeb Cook, Bruce Nesmith (Gib Htimsen), and Jeff Grubb to name a few. This was *very* distressing! I was *very* happy to read in issue #250 that Jeff Grubb is back in the fold. Welcome back, Jeff! We can only hope that more wayward children can find their way home as well. I miss Alan Varney's "Current Clack" only because he kept us "up" on recent comings and goings of TSR staff. Any information (good or bad) of this sort that you care to share is always appreciated.

Lastly, I feel the need to defend my favorite game-world. I was somewhat upset when *DRAGON Magazine* editors started printing letters on "My favorite game-world" and no one wrote in on the

We experimented with the press earlier this year, and until Ed sheds a few more pounds, we won't be able to get any more of him into the regular monthly issues. But have no fear! This year's DRAGON Magazine *Annual leads with a huge "Wyrms of the North" feature, detailing not only the geographical domains of the dragons that have already appeared in these pages but also offering a sneak preview of those wyrms slated for future issues.*

"Wyrms of the North" concludes next summer. As many readers have noted, there can be only so many dragons in the north. Fans of the prolific Realms creator need not worry that they'll miss their monthly dose of Greenwood. Ed is already brainstorming the first installments of an all-new Realms series, and he'll soon want your help deciding where to take it.

Keep an eye on the next few issues to see how you can chart the course of Ed's next journey through Faerûn!

That's *Mister* Doom to You

This letter is in regards to Justin Bacon's letter in issue #249, in which he lambastes Peter Adkison for referencing the Conan of the movies rather than the Conan of the original stories."Certainly it is not the version that Conan-creator Robert E. Howard wrote," Bacon insists, "because Howard never put pen to paper with a character of such laughable nomenclature as 'Thulsa Doom.'"

Actually, Justin, he did. The source: "Delcardes' Cat," which featured not Conan but his precursor, Kull. The story was never published in Howard's lifetime and remained in such a state until a collection of the Kull stories was printed in the '60s; a more recent compilation hit the stands in 1995. Although to the best of my knowledge Thulsa Doom makes a brief appearance in this story only, that fact didn't stop Marvel from using the character as Kull's recurring nemesis in their comic books, and the phonetics of the name were obviously striking enough for screenwriters John Milius and Oliver Stone to replace Conan's contemporary Thoth Amon with Doom while penning *Conan the Barbarian*—which must be proof that they (as do I) feel that "Thulsa Doom" is a *very* Howardesque name.

Jason Kuhl
New Haven, CT

We're embarrassed not to have remembered the origin of Thulsa Doom, but the image of James Earl Jones in a long wig must have scrambled our memories of the character forever. Fortunately, at least some of our readers have better memories. Jason wasn't the only one to comment on the Conan debate, as shown by the next letter:

Original Legends

Justin Bacon questioned whether Thulsa Doom had anything to do with Conan originally. You answered that it is interesting how different versions of heroes arise and how one cannot be tell which is truly original—or even if there is such a thing as an original Conan.

Of course, Conan should be flattered by comparisons to King Arthur or Robin Hood, but there is a big difference between Conan and these legendary characters. Neither Chretien de Troyes nor Mallory nor anyone else can claim he created King Arthur. Thus, there truly is no original King Arthur—or, if there is, he is lost in time. Robert E. Howard *did* create Conan. Thus, his stories should be considered the originals, and works of others should be compared to those.

If there ever was talk about J.R.R. Tolkien's characters, I wouldn't consider the *Bored of the Rings* parody to be a valid source for the characters, even though it too has its own charm. And I think a story would require lots of charm of its own for you to accept one about Elminster, dressed in a fur bathing suit, displaying the Intelligence and Charisma of an orc, and taking care of all his problems with couple of well-aimed fireballs.

Reijo Pehrman
Helsinki, Finland

Aside from wondering about the future evolution of fantasy fiction into legend, all we can say is that we hope Reijo hasn't given Ed any ideas about a new Elminster story.

Hack'n Slash Editor

I'm profoundly concerned by Dave Gross's closing paragraph of "Why'd It Have To Be Dragons?" in issue #248. For me—and for the people I roleplay with—the essence of roleplaying is the creation of an alternate reality, in which our characters are as "real" as we ourselves are in real life. Fun, yes, in great measure (or we would not play)–but a fun rooted in the creation of worlds and places to adventure, in the interplay of our characters with events and people created by the DM ... not in some mindless loot-seeking monster bash.

Fortunately, the rest of *Dragon Magazine* #248 contributed much more to our view of roleplaying than to this rather bleak and sterile approach. Creatures detailed not just for what they can do, but how they fit into their surroundings; fascinating material on gemstones; a few interesting spells; and a splendid "how to" article showing ways of utilizing the contents of your daily newspaper when writing scenarios.

Fantasy worlds, like the real one, have to have underlying rationales, economies, a grounding in some alternate reality, if they are to "live" in the minds and memories of those who adventure in them. Let's have more articles about how to create campaign settings, places, and scenarios that will take on a life of their own. The hobby will be the richer for it.

Megan C. Robertson
Cheshire, UK

I love it when someone takes me to task about the editorial, especially if I deserve it. In this case, I didn't make my point clearly enough. While I meant what I wrote, I'd hoped to show that character development, verisimilitude, and complex storylines all develop naturally from your basic hack'n slash dungeon crawl.

Perhaps what I should have written is something more along these lines: No matter what kind of game group you have, everyone can start a roleplaying campaign with the most elementary of adventure types, which can still be plenty of fun without adornment. Whatever you do, just don't worry about it so much that you forget to have fun.

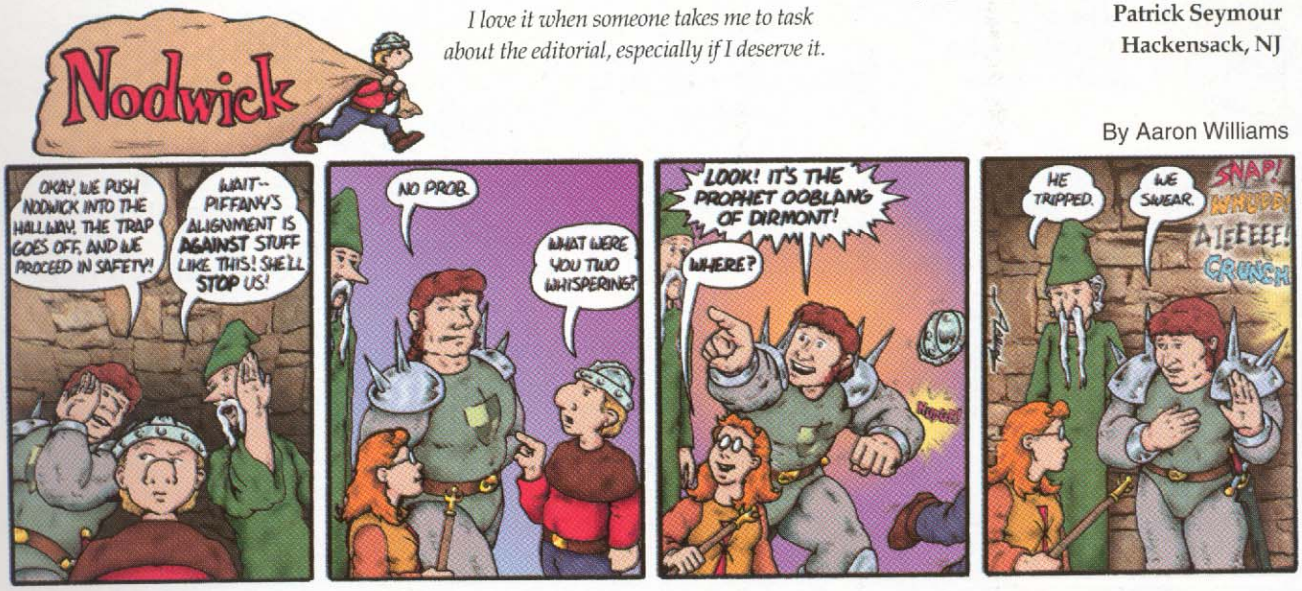
What I Really, Really Want

I am very glad that *Dragon Magazine* has refocused itself to its new format. There was a long stretch in which *Dragon Magazine* was almost painful to read! I stopped bothering to buy it. Now I'm back. (And as someone who goes all the way back to the *Strategic Review*, it's nice to be home again!)

What would I like to see? More practical articles on DMing. Useful tips on campaign design and scenario building would also be welcome. Can we please see some articles on developing PCs that don't fall into the more-new-spell-and-powers" escalation cycle? How about motivation? How about background history determination? I know, I know, if I want to see it I need to submit it. C'mon all you old timer DMs, send in your wisdom!

I will consider some articles and send in a query. Thanks for the soap-box, and keep up the good work!

Patrick Seymour
Hackensack, NJ



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Casting Call

This letter is not an opinion on your magazine, even though you have a great magazine. TSR has done roleplaying, cassettes, CDs, books, and a number of other products. The only thing TSR hasn't done is movies. Well, I think y'all need to fix this.

A great series to start movies with is the DRAGONLANCE® trilogy. These are classic fantasy stories, by far TSR's best! A DRAGONLANCE movie could be another mega-movie like the original *Star Wars*.

Now the cast members. Who would play the heroes?

Tanis Half-Elven: Bruce Willis would do great for the part. He's a tough guy like Tanis and also a great leader.

Laurana: Michelle Pfeiffer. She would play the part because she looks like an elven princess.

Tika: Nicole Kidman. With that red hair, who else?

Caramon: Val Kilmer. I think he did a good job in *Willow*.

Tasslehoff: Michael J. Fox. He looks like a little, curious prankster.

Goldmoon: Sandra Bullock. She would make a great barbarian princess.

Sturm: Kurt Russell. If you saw him in *Tombstone*, you know he'd make a great knight.

Riverwind: Kevin Costner would make a great, tough plainsman.

Raistlin: The perfect match, even in looks, would be Christopher Walken.

Lord Gunthar: Sam Elliot or or Sean Connery.

Lord Soth: What can I say but Robert DeNiro?

Kitiara: Cindy Crawford or Cory Everson. Totally bad, totally beautiful.

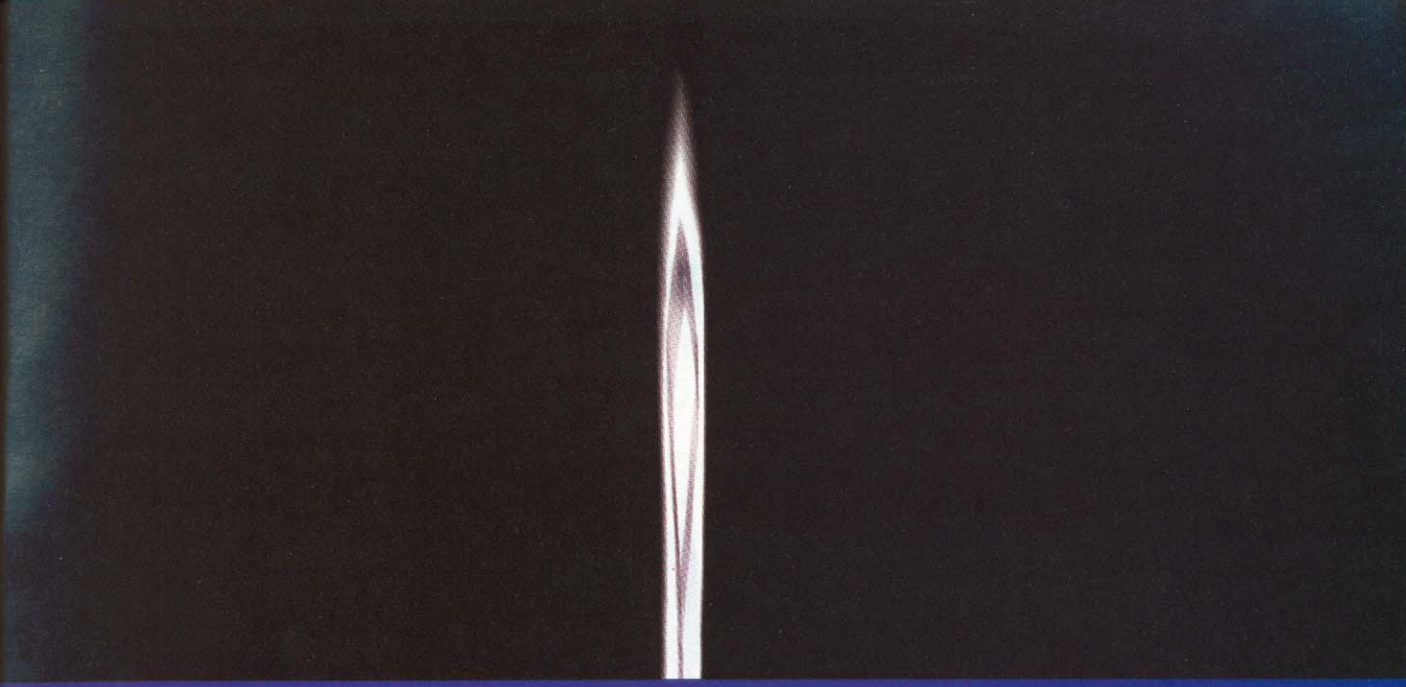
Flint: I don't know any short actors, so use your best judgment. Any suggestions, readers?

Gilthanas: Tom Hanks. He would make a great elf lord.

Fizban: Mel Brooks would be perfect for the fuddled magician.

What do you think? I think it would make a great movie. With all the computer technology today, this trilogy would be by far the greatest fantasy movie ever. Watch out, *Xena*, here comes DRAGONLANCE.

Steven Poer
Hope Mills, NC



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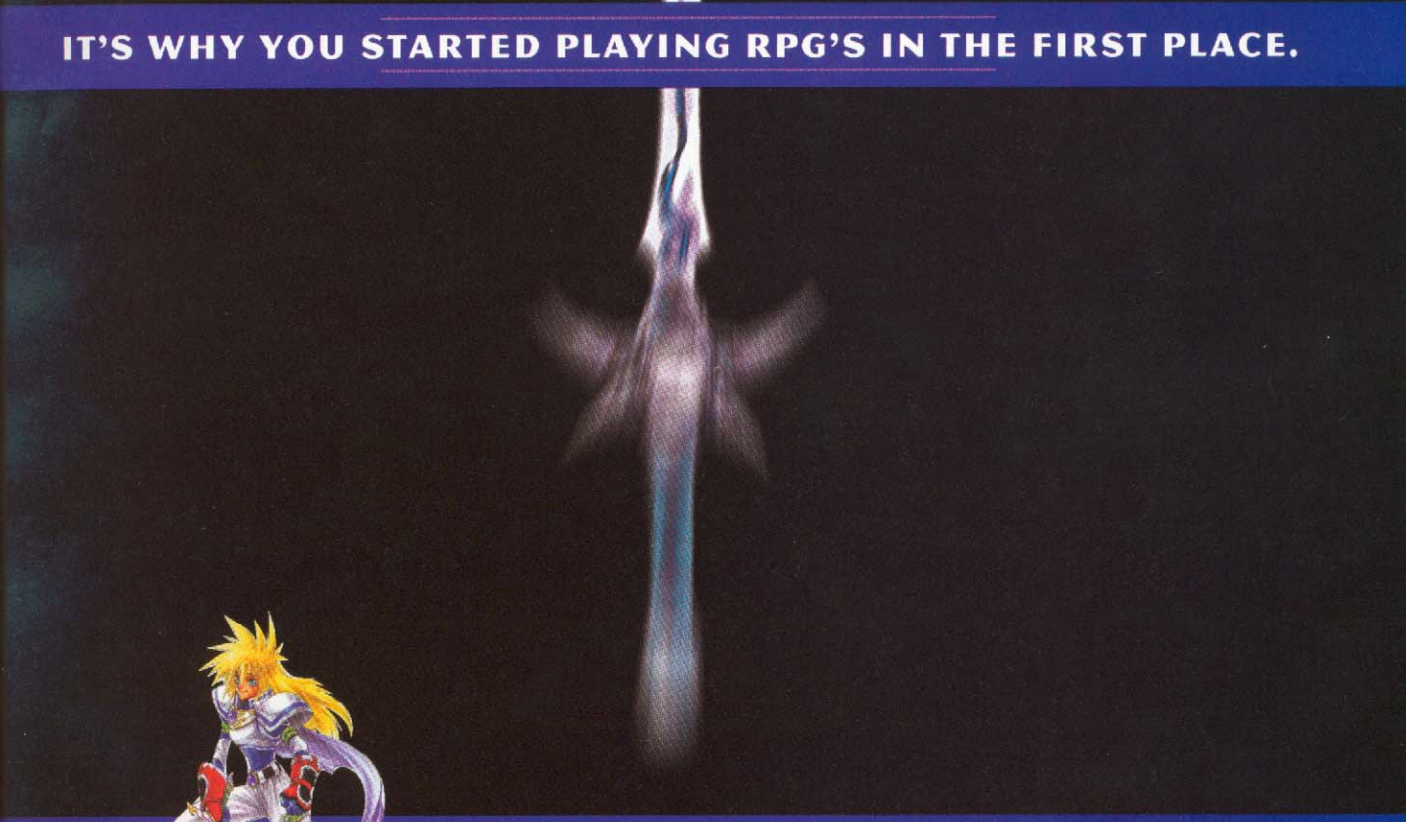

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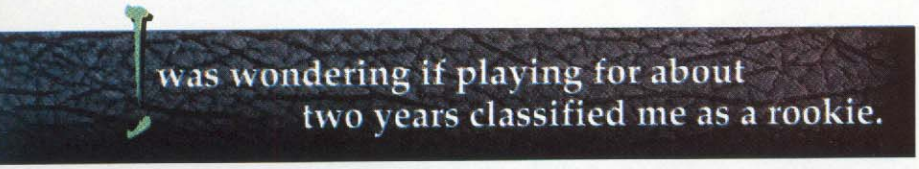
The Way to a Woman's Art

I've been reading *DRAGON Magazine* for many years; I've watched the magazine grow, cheered you on when things looked bad, and supported the industry as best as I could.

But I've never written. Why? Because so many others had already done such a wonderful job; their words were mine, the congratulations, the critiques, the toasts to success. And so I've always lurked in the shadows of everyone else's praise. Until now.



A friend of mine, who knew I had a secret love for fantasy art, announced one day, "Hey! I've got some magazines you'll like; they're full of fantasy art ..." I fell in love with the art, the magazine, and with my friend. He introduced me to the "new" 2nd Edition AD&D® game, became my first DM, and much later, my husband—all because of art.

When I looked at the cover of this month's issue, I fell in love all over again. Then I opened to pages 28 *and* 29. Brilliant! A full spread! Rebecca Guay captured the essence of mystery surrounding the whole world of gaming.

For all you editors out there—quality art sells. It also costs a lot of money to buy. We (the gaming community) will support you in this endeavor. No matter how good the prose is, if a book has poor art on the cover, no one will bother picking it up. Bit hard to sell if you can't get the buyer even to put it in his hands.

To be specific, I love large, detailed art, with minimal captions. I love the "framing" of an article with art (as in "Magic of the Seldarine," issue #251 and "Warships of the Sea," issue #250) or using art as a faded background piece (both the "Heroes of the Sea" and "The Dimernesti" in issue #250). I also really like the idea of printing character sketches for player to use. Excellent idea! To take that idea even further, what about a computer CD with art? Not just of characters but also of places and items as well. "Tomb of Horrors" (both the original and "The Return of ...") included excellent B&W illustrations that surely make a difference to the DM and players alike.

To close, I d like to thank all the artists, past and present, who have given us such fantastic works. Most of all, I'd like to thank Larry Smith, who's been around the TSR offices for a long, long time and has done a wonderful job in breathing life into our world!

Belinda G. Ashley
Washington D.C.

Fans of Rebecca's beautiful work will be pleased to see our January 1999 cover. Since the gorgeous illustration she created for "And a Ship To Sail" in issue #239, Rebecca has been one of our favorite artists.

If you haven't seen it already, you might check out the new edition of The Art of the DRAGONLANCE Saga, *recently re-released with a new introduction by Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman. And, if you can find them, there are several more books of TSR and* DRAGON Magazine *artwork from the past couple of decades. There's no doubt that the beautiful images created for TSR fantasy worlds have been a great part of the games' appeal, and we'll continue to bring you more fabulous images from the best artists in the field every month.*

Naturally, we can't officially endorse TSR artwork as a reliable means of attracting a spouse, but we're glad it worked for you.

Best Yet

I would have to say that issue #251 was the best *DRAGON Magazine* yet. I read "The Wyrm's Turn," and I was wondering if playing for about two years classifies me as a rookie.

Now on to what I loved about #251. "The Ecology of the Wererat" was perfect for my RAVENLOFT® campaign. Furthermore, the AD&D article about the Sesheyans was superb. The only thing missing were the statistics for monster sesheyans. In my RAVENLOFT campaign, I like to stick my players with creepy allies, and they would be perfect.

Now on to a few concerns. I am really nervous about a 3rd Edition. I have several 2nd Edition books and am worried about their becoming obsolete. Instead of a new edition, why don't you start a PR campaign called "Year of the Dragon," were every month you focus on a different part of the game. I think that would do a lot more to attract new players than a change of rules.

Finally, ever since I began reading your magazine I have wanted to also submit articles, but I don't know how. I went to my library and couldn't get any books on writing for magazines. I'd consider just sending some ideas in as your website says, but I also read there that if an article is not formatted correctly, the chances of you looking at a revision are slim. Could you please give me some advice.

Adam Blunt
Greenville IL

Funny you should mention "Year of the Dragon" ... but enough about that; it's a while off, yet.

For editors, we're not terribly picky about the exact format of article submissions. Your manuscript should be one column wide, double-spaced, and printed in black ink. It should be available in electronic format, but you needn't send a disk until we request one.

Of course, if you've read those guidelines, you wouldn't consider sending in a manuscript without first sending a proposal, right? Email is fine for proposals, better than regular mail, in fact. Manuscripts, once approved, should come via regular post with a big SASE and sufficient postage to return the whole package (usually with revision marks).

In short, submissions should be clean and readable, with no goofy stuff, like colored paper, perfumed envelopes, and so on.

You think I'm kidding about the perfumed envelopes, don't you?

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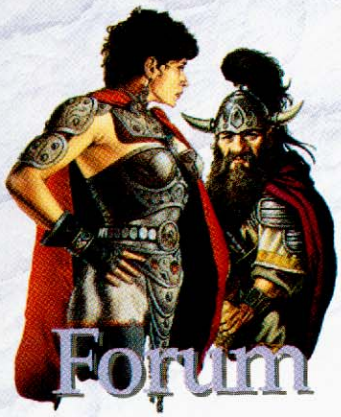

Forum

Question of the Month

Respond to the Question of the Month or any other roleplaying topic by mailing "Forum," DRAGON® Magazine, 1801 Lind Avenue S.W., Renton, WA 98055, USA; dmail@wizards.com. All material should be neatly typed or handwritten. You must include your full name and mailing address if you expect your letter to be printed (we won't print a letter sent anonymously), but we'll withhold your name or print your full address if you so request.

Which parts of the AD&D® game are too detailed and should be handled with rules that work faster (even at the cost of some realism)? Which parts of the AD&D game are too abstract and should be handled with more detail (even at the cost of speed of play)?

Weighing In on 3rd Edition

I would like to weigh in on the 3rd Edition debate. I have thought long and hard about what I would most like to see changed in a possible 3rd Edition, and the issue of greatest concern to me is the experience point system.

I dispensed long ago with the traditional experience point system. In our house rules, my fellow gamers and I have instituted a system similar to the one used in the *Talislanta** game.

In the 2nd Edition of *Talislanta* (which is the version I have), experience points are basically awarded for good roleplaying and goal completion. The number of XPs gained per adventure is small compared to the AD&D® system, but only 25 XP are needed to raise a level.

Rather than transplanting this system wholesale, we have kept the basic concept but changed the mechanics a bit. We no longer require thousands of XPs to rise a level, and we do not award XPs for killing monsters, etc. Rather, the focus of the game is roleplaying and story awards.

Players gain XPs for roleplaying well and for completing the scenario or adventure; they earn bonus points for especially intelligent/innovative play. Players may devote their XPs toward their next level requirement. Alternatively, they may buy additional skills or even purchase a limited number of "luck points." Luck points are simply a way for characters to simulate those larger-than-life qualities that set heroes apart from the general populace. They are used to alter a critical die roll in a character's favor, such as a "to hit" roll, a saving throw, and so forth. Luck points are not part of the *Talislanta* system, but I believe there is a similar concept in the *Skills & Powers* system.

Obviously, this system might not appeal to those who prefer the traditional way of gaining XPs—namely the killing of monsters. It also will not appeal to those who have little use for intensive roleplaying. For us, however, it is much more logical and aids in the storytelling process, which is my primary goal as a DM. It also requires a lot less bookkeeping!

I HAVE NEVER UNDERSTOOD how killing monsters, in and of itself, enables a thief to better this thieving skills ...

In order to prevent too rapid level advancement, we require 20 XPs for 2nd level, 30 XPs for 3rd level, 40 XPs for 4th level, and so on, up to 100 XPs for 10th level. Every level after 10th requires 100 XPs. The average XP award for each completed scenario or "story" is around 10 XPs, though this varies depending on the difficulty of the scenario and the performance of the players.

I have never understood how killing monsters in and of itself enables a thief to better his thieving skills, a ranger to improve his tracking, or a mage to hone his spellcasting abilities. It might serve to increase one's fighting ability, but how does this impact thieving abilities, tracking, and spellcraft skills? Creating and developing a well-rounded character, then using that character's skills as part of a team to accomplish certain goals, is for us a better way to simulate the gaining of valuable experience.

As far as a 3rd Edition is concerned, I would welcome it, although I am not sure it is really necessary. I think a 3rd Edition *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide* should be the larger book and the *Player's Handbook* should be smaller, with as little duplication between the two as possible. I personally feel the 1st-Edition *DMG* was vastly superior to its 2nd-Edition counterpart, and I still use the 1st-Edition *DMG* even though I play AD&D 2nd Edition. After all these years, it is still a valuable resource.

I also fervently hope that *Skills & Powers* is not the model upon which a 3rd Edition is based. If this were the case, I would not buy it. *Skills & Powers* has some interesting things to offer, but I would prefer these things remain optional and not become core elements of the game.

I would stick with the four basic classes and the existing subclasses for the most part. I would like to agree with those who view a cavalier as simply a fighter roleplayed as a cavalier. Ditto for the assassin and the barbarian; with the appropriate skills, a fighter or mage could be an assassin as easily as a thief could, and any character could come from a barbarian background regardless of class. As far as kits go, I do not usually use them; they should remain optional. The available choice of character races is about right as well; I do not think they should be expanded much if at all. My campaign is a very human-based one,

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with elves and other demihumans being elder races that are quite rare and reclusive. This imparts a sense of mystique to the demihuman races that I find useful in my campaign.

If there is a 3rd Edition, I would like to see the 1st-Edition psionics rules updated and used. I simply prefer them to any of the psionics systems introduced since. I also think the armor class system should be looked at as well. My gaming group has experimented with the idea of eliminating armor classes entirely, instead assigning a defensive value to armor. In a combat situation, the DM would assign damage and the player would adjust that damage based on the defensive value of their armor, the reasoning being that armor does not make one harder to hit per se; rather, it protects the wearer from damage they would otherwise take if they were not wearing armor. This could be used to eliminate THAC0 and replace it with an alternative, preferably simple, method of determining hits and misses based on experience level/hit dice but not necessarily on the type of armor worn. In our games we have tried this and have found that it speeds up combat dramatically.

Finally I would just like to add that I prefer the name ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® and hope that it is retained. Since the acquisition by Wizards of the Coast, it has been announced that AD&D would be aimed more at a mature audience level, and this justifies keeping the advanced game separate from the basic game, in my view. This also gives TSR the option of reviving the basic game at some point if they so desire. In my mind D&D® is to AD&D what *Portal** is to *Magic: the Gathering**.

Greg Hill
Grand Rapids MI

Nothing New

The recent letters discussing the 3rd Edition of the game have been interesting to me simply because the ideas mentioned are really nothing new. The same strengths of D&D are what people still like, a well-known system with a broad base of experienced users, easy to learn, etc. The weaknesses of D&D now are the same weaknesses that have always plagued the game. Inconsistent systems and a class/level mechanic that strains to maintain balance.

What I'd like to see is a real change in the game, truly making it state of the art. Of course the first thing to do is make it clear that this is a *game*. AD&D is *not* a simulation, and *that*, in my humble opinion, is the root of many perceived problems with the game.

IN MY MIND, D&D is to AD&D what *Portal* is to *Magic: the Gathering*.

The various ongoing debates trying to irrevocably determine the answer to a particular issue (e.g., the most accurate range of damage for a heavy crossbow bolt) is ludicrous! History and personal experience can be hashed and re-hashed *ad infinitum*, and such issues are still meaningless to the *game*. True, if the players are trying to turn AD&D into a simulation or model of a fantastic reality, the debates make some degree more sense, but are a set of roleplaying game rules the place to even attempt such a thing?

I will also cast my vote for sticking with the original D&D ability generation system, 3d6 down the line. This method is the only one that justifies having special sub-classes like the ranger and paladin. If the required scores are not rare, then the classes are not rare either. TSR, you have a responsibility to remember that AD&D is a game also! Stop pandering to the power-hungry!

It seems to me that a lot of people are forgetting what the G in RPG stands for. It's a *game*, people! Yes, TSR/WotC can do a lot to make it a better, more consistent game, but it is not supposed to be a simulation!

Personally, I would like to see the classes kept as broad templates of occupation. The diversity of point builds can then be developed as a "menu" of options to choose from when an experience level is gained. This way, the spectrum of class-related skills remains intact, but each individual will be unique. Another idea is to take a look at *GURPS** from Steve Jackson Games. *GURPS* is probably the best example of a point-build style game. One of their new supplements, *Wizards*, describes a way to "package" skills, spells and abilities to fill in a particular "vision" of a wizard type. Seems to me that AD&D classes could work the same way.

Well, so much for my contribution to the "Grand Unified Game Field Theory."

Patrick Seymour
Hackensack, NJ

The House Rules

In issue #250, Craig Hilton suggests that all PCs should be created with "Method I" ability scores. I strongly disagree with this approach, for many reasons.

Ability scores cannot be improved in AD&D. This is, of course, not strictly true—there are magical books, *pearls of power*, *ioun stones*, magical pools and the ever-useful *wish* spell—but none of these are common, and it isn't unlikely that the ability scores a PC begins with will be those he possesses when the character is retired.

No other characteristic of this importance is so resistant to change. A PC can always earn more experience points, rise in level, earn more money, expand his army, or collect more magical items—but he can (almost) never raise his Strength from 13 to 14.

And (unlike "basic" D&D) AD&D is very unforgiving of "moderately high" scores; for example, there is very little game difference between an 8 and a 14 Wisdom, even though the lower score indicates a degree of foolishness and the higher score is actually quite high. It follows that most characters created with Method I will have scores in the 9–12 range; that is, no advantages or disadvantages of any kind, right? Wrong.

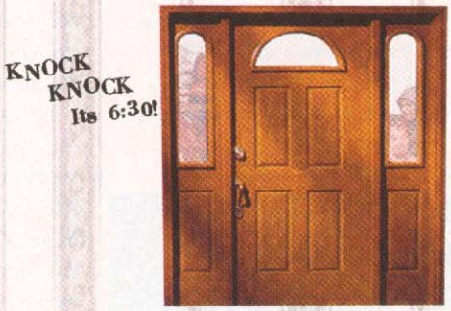
There is a further troubling aspect of ability scores. A fighter can get by with a 9 Strength; a thief can do reasonably well with a 9 Dexterity. By "reasonably well" here, I mean that such a character—while not especially gifted at their chosen profession—may eventually learn enough skill to overcome their lack of natural talent. A 20th-level fighter is going to be dangerous no matter *what* his Strength is, even if you disregard the

Billy is asked to DM.

Billy has no time.

Billy says "yes" anyway.

Billy is screwed.



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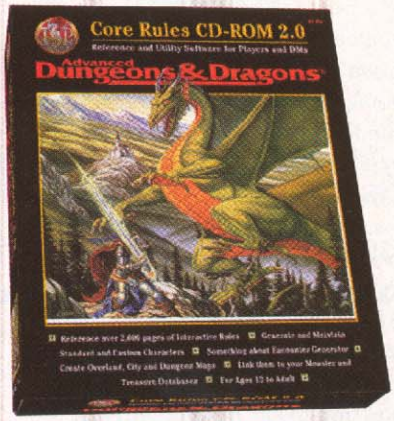

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likely possibility that he has access to such items as *gauntlets of ogre power* or a *girdle of giant strength*. Likewise, a 20th level thief will have great skills in his profession even without the advantage of high Dexterity.

But this state of affairs does not apply to the poor priest, who (with a Wisdom of only 9) suffers a spell failure chance and cannot cast 6th and 7th level spells. And a wizard with only a 9 Intelligence will have great difficulty learning any spells at all with his low chance to learn spells, and he is likewise denied the most powerful spells of his profession.

It is certainly true that *most* wizards, priests, and so forth in a typical AD&D world may be of the "9–12" variety, but surely PCs are special? A player might end up playing a character for years. Is it really wise to force them to play a character who will never be more than mundane? Not every PC will be a hero, of course, but I believe (as both DM and player) that every PC should have the *potential* to be a hero—whether the PC lives up to that potential is up to the player.

I DISLIKE ANY RANDOM METHOD of generating character abilities; to me, rolling dice for something as static and important as Ability Scores is asking for trouble.

There is another reason to avoid Method I, but this is admittedly more controversial. I dislike *any* random method of generating character abilities; to me, rolling dice for something as static and important as ability scores is asking for trouble. Inevitably, one player will roll very well and another will roll very badly. It is true that good roleplayers can play *any* sort of character—no matter how poor the initial prospects—but they can play characters with high abilities as well as those with low abilities, and most people would prefer to do so. I personally favor the new Method introduced in *Skills & Powers* whereby all players distribute a set number of points among their ability scores. This way, everybody can play the character they want to play, and nobody has any advantage due to lucky dice rolling.

In the same issue, Lloyd Brown raises the problem of poison damage. I agree with many of his points; I use a house rule for poison in my own campaigns. Every type of poison is rated with a damage range (e.g., 1d4 for a mild poison, up to 1d20 for a very deadly poison). Besides this damage range, each poison also has an onset time. After this amount of time has elapsed since victims were originally poisoned, they take the listed damage for the poison. At this point they are permitted a saving throw vs. poison; if successful, they suffer no further damage. If unsuccessful, they take the damage again after the onset time has again elapsed and must make another saving throw, and so forth. Some weak poisons permit a bonus to this saving throw; deadly poisons might force a penalty.

For example, in my campaign I use the following figures for giant spider venom: 1d6/3 rounds/–1 to save. This means that a character hit by a giant spider suffers 1d6 hp damage three rounds after the attack. He must then save vs. poison at –1; if unsuccessful, he takes another 1d6 damage after another three rounds and must save again until he is either successful or dies.

The advantages of this system are that even high-level characters can be hurt by poison (and if the damage range is large—1d20, say—even the initial dose can be deadly), while low level characters are not necessarily instantly slain by it. Poison remains dangerous, but it also takes time to kill. In addition, I find it makes the *slow poison* spell more useful, especially if healing is close at hand.

One other "special effect" type of damage that I have never agreed with is energy draining. It certainly serves to make PCs fear the undead, but beyond this the ability lacks logic and purpose. It is easier to raise someone from the dead than it is to restore the damage from a single hit by a wight, and at higher levels (since *restoration* takes the character only to the minimum experience point total to regain the former level) it is a problem even if the proper spells are available.

The ability of the undead to perform this feat does not seem to derive from any mythical source that I can deduce. To take the most obvious example, don't vampires drink blood? I realize that blood is "life force" in a metaphorical sense, but PCs do not lose levels of experience points due to bleeding, even from other supernatural sources such as a *sword of wounding*. (A *sword of life stealing* is another matter, of course, but that falls under the same problem.) On the other hand, simple loss of hit points does not seem sufficient to represent this problem.

I have used several alternatives to the "level drain" in the past. Most simply, I rule that the level drain is not permanent and recovers at the rate of 1 level per day of rest. Experience points are *not* changed; given time, the character fully recovers. This does not make undead less lethal—should they fully drain a character in combat, he is just as dead (and still rises as a new undead, if appropriate)—but it does make it possible to face them without the groan from your players about losing another hard-earned level. Alternatively, I have applied the reductions to Constitution (which can easily be construed as measuring "life force"), again on a temporary basis. Note that this applies to *all* energy draining, whether by spell or vampire touch.

Finally, my thoughts on a 3rd Edition of the game. On the whole, I feel a 3rd Edition is probably necessary to concentrate the core rules in a few volumes once more. I believe the PLAYER'S OPTION® series should become part of the core rules—perhaps as optional rules, but definitely within the new *Player's Handbook* (or equivalent). I think the "great kit experiment" of 2nd Edition could be usefully abandoned; PCs don't need kits anymore with the greater customizing options available in *Skills & Powers* (although if this raises a huge public outcry, I'm not opposed to retaining them).

A simplified task resolution system would also be advisable (as in "rolling high is always good, rolling low is

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always bad"), since I often find novices get confused that a high roll is good when rolling to hit, but bad when checking a nonweapon proficiency.

... the base problem is that all magic in some way is an alteration of the way things work, and "alteration" is too general a term.

The armor class system should reverse to "high is good, low is bad"; keeping it the way it is currently is nothing more than backward compatibility.

Other than these few "tinkerings," however—all of which are simple house rules that many DMs of my acquaintance already use—I believe the system should remain largely the same.

AD&D is still the most popular fantasy RPG in the world; that many gamers can't all be wrong, and the maxim "if it ain't broke, don't fix it" probably applies. I think it would be a mistake to throw out levels and class distinctions—not because I don't like games without these features, but because it wouldn't feel like AD&D without them.

Finally, I think it would also be a good idea to try selling the AD&D game as a boxed set as well as individual hard covers; a player might want only the *Player's Handbook*, but a DM really wants "the big three" (*PHB*, *DMG*, and *MONSTROUS MANUAL*™ book—in whatever fashion these concepts survive), as well as an introductory module (not only for novices; such a module could also help a veteran DM identify the key changes in the new system).

Gary Sturgess
Bentley, Western Australia

"Spellbooks On Tape"

More Alterations

I am writing this about the subject of the spells in the school of Alterations. This letter is in reply to Matt Wilson's letter in #251. I disagree with several of his explanations about why certain spells are in the school of alteration.

Burning Hands: If this spell gave the caster the ability to shoot fire, as he said, then it should have more then one use. As it is, it is much more likely to be an Invocation/Evocation spell.

Color Spray: Along with this and all the other "transforms the material components into the spell's effect." This excuse could be applied to any spell with material components and physical results (practically).

Delude: This spell conceals the alignment of the caster, and falls into the Illusion category by my book.

Vacancy: Matt's description of "alters the victim's perception" could be applied to any illusion spell. Besides, *vacancy* doesn't affect a single person's perception, it affects several.

I realize that most any spell could be described as several schools, particularly with the broad range of Alteration's portfolio. In fact, I feel that *wish* is actually an alteration of reality, not a Conjuration/Summoning. These are just my opinions, and others might not agree with them, but as I said earlier, almost any spell can be described as an alteration. (Altering the life force for most necromancy spells, altering perceptions for illusion, altering the caster's perception for divination, etc.) I think the base problem is that all magic in some way is an alteration of the way things work, and "alteration" is too general a term.

Ben Wray
Norwich, CT

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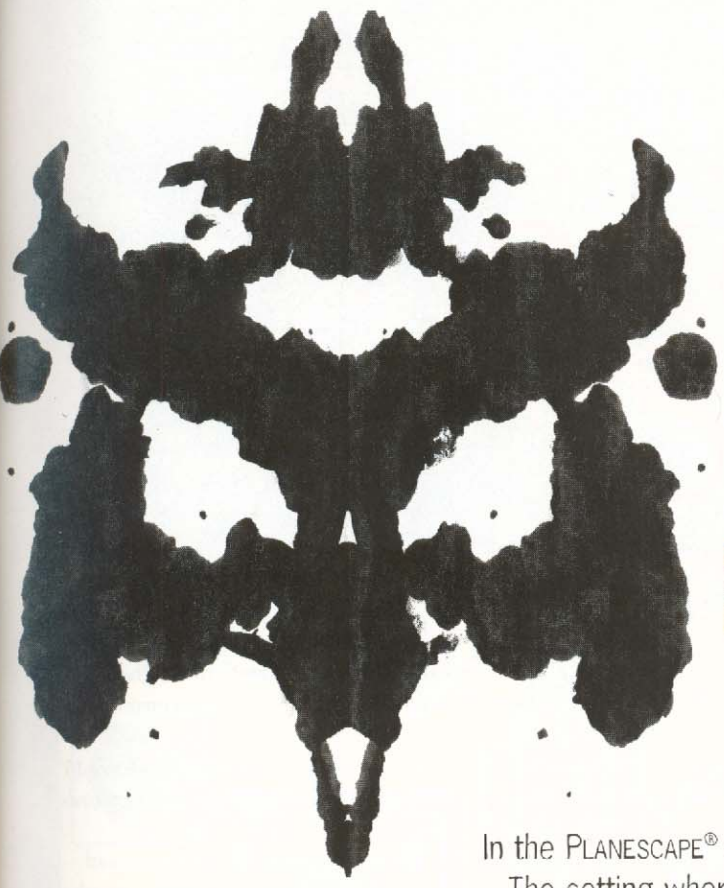

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The head of a panda?

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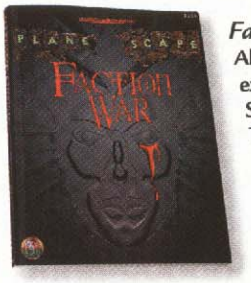

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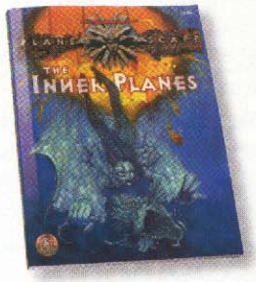

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Sage Advice

By Skip Williams

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This month, the Sage tackles diverse subjects from the AD&D® game.

In both the *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide* and the *ENCYCLOPEDIA MAGICA™* tome, the entries for magical manuals (which improve ability scores or boost levels for some characters) say that a reader retains information gleaned from them for three months and that it takes one month to gain the benefits. The descriptions for other magical books (librams and tomes) say it takes one month to gain the benefits but reveal nothing about duration of knowledge. Does this mean that magical manuals can be used three times before the knowledge is lost?

No, it means that a reader must find the time to complete the one-month training period (no adventuring or other activity while training) within three months after reading the work. The rule applies to any magical manual, libram, or tome. Note that some effects from a magical book (such as damage or experience loss to a reader of the wrong class or alignment) occur immediately, no matter what the reader does.

Because there is a first-level priest spell *invisibility to undead*, some people have started claiming that the second-level wizard spell *invisibility* does not affect undead. There is a lot of "technical" evidence either way, but what is the intent? Are undead automatically immune to *invisibility* spells?

No, undead are not automatically immune to *invisibility*. If they were, their descriptions would list that as a special ability. Undead "see" just as other creatures do. (I recommend normal human vision, plus infravision to 90 feet.) Note that *invisibility to undead* makes undead ignore the recipient so long as he or she does nothing hostile, which makes it better (in terms of concealment) than regular *invisibility*.

Could a character be *resurrected* after being slain by a *power word kill*? A *death spell* is of much lower level and doesn't allow this possibility. For a ninth-level spell, *power word kill* is very restricted about its possible target. Also, it is possible to destroy outright a dracolich with this spell. If it can destroy forever such a powerful creature, why couldn't it so destroy a PC?

Creatures killed with *power word kill* can be *raised* or *resurrected*. The spell kills without a saving throw, but not irrevocably. A dracolich's vulnerability to *power word kill* represents a special weakness of that particular creature, not a special property of the spell. Most undead, being dead already, ignore death effects.

Note that any creature whose current hit points total 60 or less can be slain by *power word kill*. The sixth-level *death spell* slays victims irrevocably, but only if they have 8+3 hit dice or fewer. If that seems incongruous to you, I heartily recommend dropping the *death spell's* power to cause irrevocable death rather than extending the power to *power word kill*.

The second-level priest spell *silence 15' radius* defeats the various *power words* and *holy word*, right?

Yes and no. The various *power word* spells and the *holy word* spell have verbal components. *Silence 15' radius* prevents the use of verbal components within its area of effect.

Once one of these spells has been successfully cast, however, they fill their normal areas of effect—magical silence (or deafness) notwithstanding. A creature does not have to hear one of these spells being spoken to be affected any more than a creature has to hear the verbal component of a *fireball* spell to be burned in the blast.

Just how many arrows can fit into a quiver? What about sheaf arrows? And how many bolts can fit in a bolt case?

A quiver or bolt case holds 20 missiles of the appropriate type.

How many arrows can a bowyer/fletcher make in a day?

If the character has a supply of arrowheads, she can make 1d6 arrows a day (see the bowyer/fletcher proficiency description in Chapter 5 of the *Player's Handbook*).

How many knives, daggers, or darts fit in a bandolier?

I suggest six.

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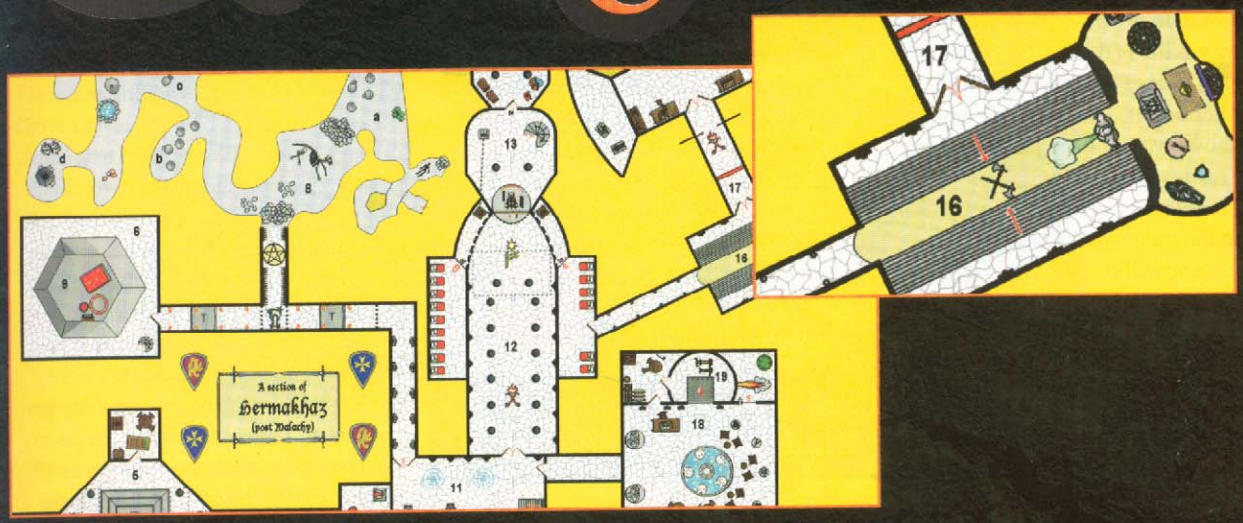

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In the *Player's Handbook* page 43, it says a wizard spends his youth learning arcane languages, poring through old books, and practicing his spells. This would suggest that a wizard who can't read and write would be pretty worthless, yet I have seen players make wizard PCs who can't read or write in any language, and most DMs seem to overlook this. This would be like a warrior too weak to lift his own sword or a priest with no faith. Should a wizard either be required to take or assumed to have the reading/writing nonweapon proficiency or scribe secondary skill? Is there any way around this without giving a basic wizard another bonus or more requirements?

Many DMs I know require wizards to take read/write proficiency in at least one language or give it to them for free.

An illiterate wizard, however, is not impossible in the AD&D universe. The arcane symbols used to scribe magic constitute a sort of universal language all by themselves, just like modern musical notation. It's possible that a character could learn to read and write magic notation without ever learning to read or write anything else.

What are the item saving throw numbers for the Rod of Seven Parts?

What are the item saving throw numbers for the Rod of Seven Parts? I'd particularly like to know about a certain disintegration saving throw the Rod might have to make.

The Rod usually doesn't need to make saving throws at all. However, for the particular saving throw you're asking about, the Rod saves as metal (saving throw number of 17 vs. disintegration). The DM can include the fully assembled Rod's +4 bonus if he likes.

What would be the modifiers to thieving abilities if you're wearing dragon hide armor?

The same as for scale mail.

Am I reading the description for the fifth-level wizard spell *Mordenkainen's lucubration* right? Any first–fifth level spell the wizard has used in the past 24 hours can be instantly recalled? Does that mean one could cast a *wall of force* (casting time 5) earlier in the day, then recast it with a casting time of 1?

No, you're not reading the description correctly. A *wall of force* spell recalled through *Mordenkainen's lucubration* still has a casting time of 5. The spell has a study time (normally 10 minutes per spell level after a good night's sleep) of instant.

When a character casts a *dispel magic* spell on an area, can she choose which spell effect to dispel? Or must she must check for every spell effect working in the area?

When *dispel magic* is cast as an area effect, all magic in the area must be checked (unless it is not subject to *dispel magic* in the first place, see "Sage Advice," issue #252 for details). Note that the dispel caster's own spells are dispelled automatically.

I have a small problem with the subabilities (from the *Skills & Powers* book). When I adjust a low Strength I get some really weird results. For example, Strength 7, Stamina 9, Muscle 5. The character doesn't get tired carrying 35 lbs., but he can't even lift more than 25 (his maximum press rating). What suggestions do you have to help prevent or fix problems like this?

You seem to have overlooked what "maximum press" means. The character can lift only 25 lbs. over his head, but he can carry 35 lbs. That is, the character can struggle into a backpack holding 35 lbs. of stuff and walk around with it, but he can't lift that same backpack over his head—sounds like some people I know.

As a rule of thumb, assume that a character can lift a weight of about twice his maximum press rating to waist height, provided he can get a good grip, has plenty of time, and has good footing. The character cannot move carrying that much weight in his hands.

If a wizard loses her spellbook, does the character retain enough memory of the spells to copy them into a new book? Or is she left with no spells? What about spells she has memorized? Surely the character would be able to copy memorized spells into a new spellbook. Just how does this work?

The wizard must either find new copies and enter them into her spellbook or research new versions of her spells.

I'm inclined to be indulgent toward player characters in this situation. I suggest allowing the character to memorize spells she already knows (has recorded in her spellbook) from another character's spell book. Since making magical notations is an art that allows for considerable variation from wizard to wizard, the character using the borrowed book should attempt a "chance to learn" roll (see Table 4 in the *PHB*). If the roll fails, the wizard fails to prepare the spell and cannot try again until the next day.

I also suggest allowing wizards to recopy memorized spells into a new book. The process requires one day per spell level. The cost is 100 gp per page (each spell requires one page per spell level, plus 0 to 5 (1d6–1) extra pages).

I was told that the specialty priests of Mystra in the *Faiths & Avatars* book should have included elves but that they were left off in error. I checked the TSR webpage, but there was no errata section for this book.

According to TSR's Julia Martin, you were told wrong. Mystra is a human deity, and her section in *Faiths & Avatars* was never intended to include elves. On the other hand, Julia also says Mystra has a handful of non-human specialty priests. Such characters are rare. They come to worship Mystra through some extraordinary event—such as a direct intervention by Mystra—in their lives.

Say a paladin's mount is a giant eagle. Is it possible to put a *ring of protection* on the giant eagle? Are the claws too big, or can the *enlarge* spell do anything about that?

A magical ring can be worn on anything that approximates a finger. Unfortunately, an eagle's claws are toes—not fingers. An *enlarge* spell can't do

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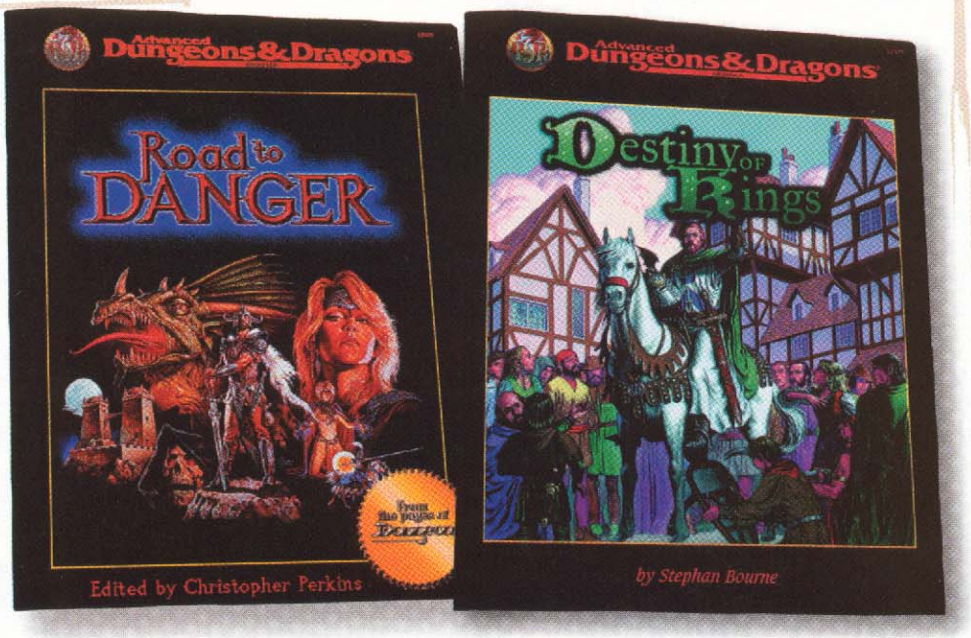

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anything about that. I suppose one could enlarge a magical ring so it would fit on a really big finger, but that's usually only a temporary solution. (*Enlarge* can be made permanent.) If the *enlarge* was not made permanent, something dramatic, and maybe painful, might happen when the spell wore off.

During a battle, my mage cast a *mirror image* spell. Another mage had come from behind and cast a *charm person* spell. We were all confused about whether the *charm person* spell would directly affect the mage or one of the images. Would there be a random roll to determine if the spell hit an image or my character? Or would the spell just affect my character?

A DM has two options here. First, treat any individually targeted effect as a melee or missile attack. Roll to see if the attack struck the wizard or an image. Effects targeted at images automatically fail. I don't like this option very much, but it fits the letter of the rules.

I prefer the following: Assume a *mirror image* spell creates a distortion effect similar to that of a *cloak of displacement*. This would grant the *mirror image* user a +2 saving throw adjustment against spells such as *charm person*, but there would be no roll to see if such a spell would strike an image and be wasted.

Note that a *magic missile* or any effect that requires an attack roll still might be targeted on an image and wasted.

Some magical rings—such as *wizardry, mammal control,* and *djinni summoning*—are limited by the number of charges they have. However, the only ring that I've found that actually lists the number of charges is the *ring of the ram,* which has 6 to 10 charges. Is this a normal range?

There's no typical range of charges for rings; several of these listings are simply erroneous. For example, a *ring of wizardry* works once a day—when a wizard prepares spells. When in doubt, it's better to set a daily use limit (I suggest 1 to 3 uses) than a charge limit.

I have a question about the *rod of building* from the *Encyclopedia Magica*™ book. A character in my campaign wants to build a very large concentric castle using the rod. Exactly how much castle can the character build? How quickly can he build it? Certainly the keep would contain more stone than the outer wall. If I were to assign one charge per "object," then a large stone tower would cost the same amount of charges as a small stone tower. And using these same guidelines, making a large outer wall would be nearly impossible using the *rod* because each section of wall would have to be considered an object.

The item description speaks of the structure being built in square feet per round. You might want to make that 10' cubes instead. Don't worry about how much stone the structure contains, just its total volume. (It takes as long for the rod to create a normal building as it does to create a solid pyramid of the same volume). Note that a *rod of building*, as described in *Encyclopedia Magica Volume 3*, has no charges; it just builds things. If you were to assign it standard rod charges, I'd suggest you have it expend one charge for each day or hour of use (with a minimum of one charge per structure).

If a mob of kobolds swarms over you, can you still shoot arrows at them?

Does the fifth-level wild mage spell *vortex* affect creatures such as golems, undead, and so on as it does magical creatures? I figure yes. I'd expect a *vortex's* raw magical energy to disrupt and harm any such creature.

I suggest DMs allow a *vortex* to damage extraplanar creatures, undead, and pretty much anything struck only by magical weapons. Creatures immune to normal weapons but subject to damage from special kinds of non-magical weapons should not be vulnerable to a *vortex* unless they also fit into one of the other two categories. For example, a lycanthrope would not be vulnerable to a *vortex*, but a wight would. The damage inflicted should be 1d6 points per caster level. Golems are notoriously resistant to spell effects, including *vortex*, and suffer no damage from the spell.

If a mob of kobolds swarms over you, can you still shoot arrows at them? There is a rule that says you might hit your friends if you shoot into melee, but is there a rule against shooting a bow at an enemy attacking you in melee?

The AD&D core rules don't include any specific rule against using a missile weapon in melee combat, but missile weapons don't work in melee combat. The "missing" rule should read something like this:

If a character tries to use a missile weapon in melee, all his opponents get attacks of opportunity. The only exception is the first round of melee, in which a character with a missile weapon can make one normal missile attack as the opponents close in (provided they are in the character's field of fire as they close).

Let's say I have a big *bag of holding*, one with a 250-cubic-foot capacity. I have a little money, a sword, and not much other stuff. Because the bag is so big inside, getting things out could be a problem if I don't want to just dump everything out. My arms are not 10 to 20 feet long, so how do I get at my sword when 50 orcs are after me?

A *bag of holding* has no power that lets a user quickly retrieve an object from its depths. There are any number of practical things the bag owner can do to keep the contents organized. The easiest approach is to keep the bag filled with something light and bulky, such as twigs or straw, and keep all the important stuff on top (within easy reach). The owner can just discard the packing material as he finds worthwhile things to place in the bag.

Skip Williams gives his basic advice for bag of holding *owners ("Put the important stuff on top.") based on personal experience. Skip, who is an Eagle Scout and sometime outdoorsman, notes—with a trace of chagrin—that even normal backpacks can seem enormous inside, especially when one has to root around in them after dark.*

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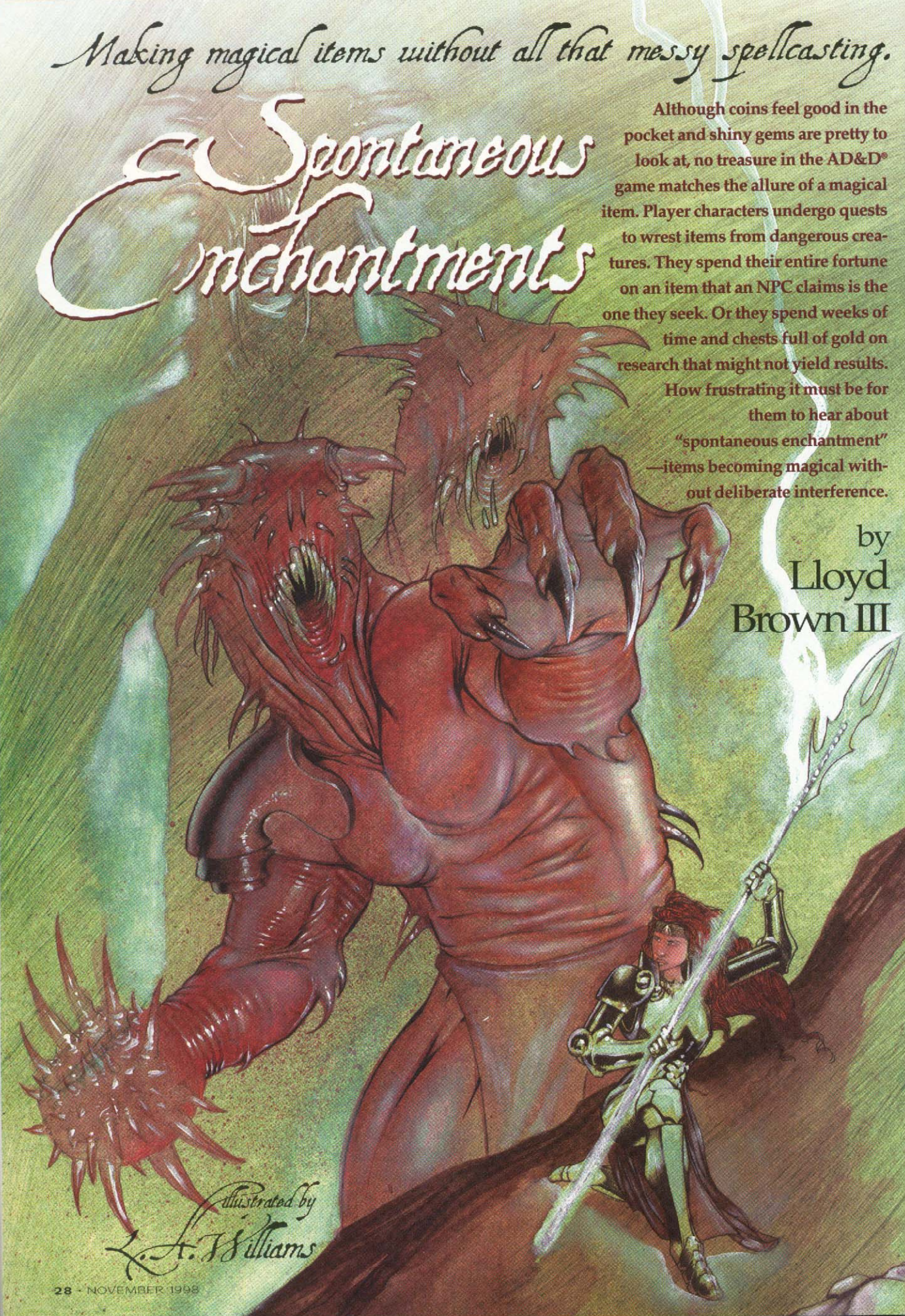
Making magical items without all that messy spellcasting.

Spontaneous Enchantments

Although coins feel good in the pocket and shiny gems are pretty to look at, no treasure in the AD&D® game matches the allure of a magical item. Player characters undergo quests to wrest items from dangerous creatures. They spend their entire fortune on an item that an NPC claims is the one they seek. Or they spend weeks of time and chests full of gold on research that might not yield results. How frustrating it must be for them to hear about "spontaneous enchantment" —items becoming magical without deliberate interference.

by Lloyd Brown III



Illustrated by L. A. Williams

On the other hand, they would consider themselves favored of the gods if one of their own mundane items acquired an unexpected enchantment. When fighting an elemental, or golem, the PCs might find a magical weapon crucial to their survival. If they needed an escape from a pocket dimension, relief from disease, or a solution to one of a hundred other problems that beset adventurers, a spontaneously created magical item could be exactly what the adventure needs to keep going.

Anything that the PCs can have, the NPCs can have as well. In fact, with so many more NPCs in the campaign, the majority of spontaneous items should be encountered in the hands of others. PCs might journey for a long time without gaining one or experiencing an actual enchantment themselves. These items are far rarer than those intentionally created by a wizard or priest.

Another aspect of spontaneous magic is that the nature of the enchantment creates a wide variety of items. Weapons and armor are in the minority of items encountered. Everyday items like bowls, clothing, coins, tools, and carts gain enchantments ranging from the minor to the truly potent.

Spontaneous enchantment is a DM's tool as well as window dressing for the campaign. Imagine that you are creating a tribe of giants, for example, knowing that your PCs will encounter them soon. If you don't want to give them the standard captive-wizard NPC to explain their *wizard locked* doors and *alarm* spells, you can use one of the situations below and create a history in which the giants had the opportunity for an item within their home to become magical, allowing them to prepare magical defenses. One or two other carefully selected magical items can fill out the rest of the wizard's plot point, and you have eliminated an NPC who had no real purpose in the adventure except to provide the spells.

To help the PCs, you might carefully plan a spontaneous enchantment in advance so that the situation arises just when the characters really need a magical item. Perhaps they become caught in the pocket dimension mentioned before as a result of a unique spell. An item capable of dispelling magic can return them, although it might also surprise them as well, until they have a chance to examine the item more closely.

Besides making game sense in the form of plot points and adventures, spontaneous magic helps return some of the wonder of magical items that might be lost on jaded players. Some characters have plundered dozens of lost tombs and been rewarded with so many magical items that another *long sword +1* is just another *long sword +1*. Spontaneous enchantment, if you use it sparingly and creatively, can enhance the value of the item to the players. The item becomes memorable because of its uniqueness.

The enchanted items help enhance your lovingly created NPCs as well. Instead of hesitantly remembering the princess the they rescued last year, the PCs will certainly remember Tirana and her affection for George's bard, Scaltha, if the bard still carries the pearls she left behind as a trail. Of course, Scaltha keeps them because they remind of Tirana, but he carries them because they magically find other pearls.

How Does it Happen?

A spontaneous enchantment generally occurs as a result of a single influencing factor, although more than one factor might seem appropriate. The primary influencing factor determines the form and creation of an item. Other factors might help decide the specific abilities or likelihood of enchantment.

Many characters, whether PCs or NPCs, use spontaneously created magical items without realizing their nature. Either the magic has no visual effect and works constantly, without a command word, or the item previously failed to reveal its magical properties under divination and is assumed to be non-magical. Craftsmen of all sorts especially mistake the useful properties of their enchanted tools as indications of their own skill. Anyone associated with a wizard (the king in his court, for example, or the githyanki in an astral fortress) might assume the effect to be a friendly gesture by a person known for such acts and never associate it with the item itself.

Most often, spontaneous enchantment should be your intentional work and serve a real purpose in the campaign. For those methods of enchantment that have a chance of occurring randomly, assume a 5% chance of spontaneous enchantment, unless otherwise noted. Spontaneous enchantment results primarily from four sources: **association, divine influence, creation,** and **psychic influence.** Each of these unique sources has varying methods of meeting the criteria for spontaneous enchantment. While some might have some overlap with other sources, each is distinct in either the cause of the magic or the nature of the item enchanted.

Association

Items created by association are created by one of several means. The most common is **long-term association,** followed by **family association, physical association,** and **location association.** Each is different in origin, and often the items enchanted give hints to the nature of the source.

Items that are enchanted by association are among the most common. When an item is held and carried by a strong-willed character for a long period of time, it might begin to acquire an enchantment that reflects the character's personality. The specific nature of the magic should reflect the circumstances that inspired the magic. Association can cause an item to be enchanted randomly.

Example: *Sir Marin is a fearless cavalier who claims over a thousand jousts. One day he finds that his lady's scarf, which has decorated his lance for years, happens to glow under a* detect magic *cast by another PC. When the identify reveals that the scarf protects Sir Marin from an enemy's lance, his success in battle is partially explained.*

Long-Term Association

To meet this requirement—known as long-term association—the character must carry the item for at least 30 years. This span assumes a human lifetime. Demihumans might need to carry an item for much longer. Obviously, many PCs never meet this age requirement, much less carry a single item for that long. Equipment wears out or is lost, weapons and armor are replaced by magical weapons and armor, which are in turn replaced by better magical weapons and armor.

Nonplayer characters who stay at home or wander less than the PCs are more likely to meet this requirement. Their equipment is not subject to the hazards of acid traps, behemoths that can swallow a character whole, or frequent fireballs. Retired PCs might encounter this source of spontaneous enchantment, depending on their actions after retirement.

Example: *Allistair is a hedge wizard who uses the same clay bowl to brew medicinal poultices for a small town every day for most of his life. Eventually, he finds that his concoctions acquire amazing potency, never realizing that he's making one* potion of healing *after another.*

Family Association

Family association is similar to long-term association. It refers to the enchantment of an heirloom passed down from one generation to the next. Such an item must also be used, although it needn't be used to the extent of an item enchanted through long-term association. Powers granted through family association depend on a characteristic common to the family.

Example: *House Galantra is a noble family known for their generosity; they return a treasury surplus to the people in the form of a year-end celebration, a tax break for next year, or a lottery. A signet ring owned by this family raises the wearer's Charisma by one point, as long as the wearer lives in Galantra Keep.*

Example: *House Mazurek taxed its peasants into poverty and also affected an heirloom. This family's signet ring confers* treasure finding *as the potion of the same name once per week when worn by a family member. When all else fails and no exceptional common trait reflects the family, a generic "luck" bonus is appropriate. The item might bestow a bonus to saving throws or allow an extra year or two of longevity.*

Depending on how frequently the item is used, spontaneous enchantment requires at least five generations. An item worn and used every day requires the minimum. A serving set used only once a year or a horn winded only on the passing of a patriarch might require several years longer.

Physical Association

Actually touching certain items can bring about spontaneous enchantment through physical association. Proximity without touching can also result in spontaneous enchantment, but the process takes much longer, depending on distance. Physical association takes at least seven years in the case of an item actually touching the powerful magic on a regular basis, and no less than 10 for an item that is normally within one foot or touches the source of the magic on a regular basis. Items that are rarely within a foot of the existing source or touch it infrequently might take as long as 20 years.

Example: Excalibur's *sheath is the most notable example. Although not specifically enchanted, it constantly held the mighty sword and thus gained a useful enchantment of its own—the ability to protect the wearer from non-magical cuts.*

Magical items capable of passing on their enchantment should be fairly powerful. As a rule of thumb, assume that the item must have an experience point value of at least 2,500. The type of magic bestowed is generally related to the magic of the existing item. The case that holds a frequently-recharged wand of fire might gain a resistance to fire. A *ring of elemental command* might allow a physically associated item to gain a power identical to one of its many functions.

Note that artifacts cause the spontaneous enchantment of items in contact with them, but the effects might not be beneficial. Any artifact that enchants an item through physical association has at least a 20% chance of creating a cursed item; and evil artifacts have at least a 50% chance of creating a cursed item. Exceptionally strong-willed artifacts increase this chance and also reduce the time required to spontaneously enchant an item through physical association by up to half.

Location Association

Location association is slightly different from physical association. To meet this condition, an item must be touching or near a magical effect, rather than a magical item. Wild magic areas and dead magic areas are good examples. Portals to other planes are powerful sources of magic that might affect nearby items. An item created by proximity to a wild magic area can have avariety of properties, but randomness is essential. On the other hand, an item that is found in a dead magic area might grant an owner a small amount of magic resistance.

Example: *An ancient grotto, supposedly the site of a divine battle before recorded history, distorts local geography by causing water in it to fall upward, creating a reverse waterfall. A loose horseshoe falls into the pool and, ages later, gains the ability to allow a horse wearing it to walk on water, as if wearing a full set of* horseshoes of the zephyr.

Divine Influence

Divine influence can be used in several similar but distinct ways. **Direct enchantment, quests, rewards,** and **token repayments** all affect different servants of the gods. Some of these pawns are willing, some less so.

An item created by proximity to a wild magic area, can have a wide variety of properties.

Direct Enchantment

Magical items can become useful tools to further a god's goals, so they are created only rarely and with little announcement, lest a rival find out and destroy the item or create his own. Certainly, the priests themselves may create as many items as time, gold, and personal ability allow, but the gods do not commonly engage in this activity.

Hence, divine influence is a relatively uncommon method of bestowing a spontaneous enchantment. Most commonly, they are created for the purpose of furthering a god's sphere of influence. Any character whose activities might serve the gods wishes, whether the act is intentional or not, might find that an item carried gains an enchantment that helps that goal.

By direct enchantment, a god imbues an item carried by a mortal with a power that furthers the god's goals. The mortal need not be a follower and can become anguished because he unintentionally aided the god. Evil gods especially prefer to use this technique to spread misery among the followers of their enemies.

Example: *A druid is desperate to stop a group of illithids from recovering a psionic item in an old mill and has no time to seek advice or aid. He poisons their water supply, killing most of them and forcing the rest to abandon their cause. Their water happens to be drawn from a nearby river, and the poison ends up affecting plants and animals downstream. A rival of the druid's god diabolically enchants the druid's staff with the ability to* detect poison *once per day. The druid might very well benefit from the magic, but he is reminded daily of his failure to consider the consequences of his actions.*

Quests

Quests (meaning the spell, not a self-chosen task) can generate spontaneous enchantments more frequently than can direct enchantment by a deity. Since a *quest* most often serves to enhance the temporal power of the priesthood, rather than directly serving the god's sphere of influence, this condition is slightly different from the one above. Also, the enchantment often occurs simultaneously with the bestowal of the *quest*, rather than during or after the actions that advance the god's cause.

As a rule, a *quest* that entails a search for a magical item has no chance of this occurrence. Other *quests*, such as the recovery of a non-magical artifact, an ancient text, or a saint's remains, are fair game. For a *quest*, the god whose priest cast the spell takes a direct interest and gives the questing character an item to help improve his chances of success. Because this type of enchantment often leaves a magical item in the hand of a non-worshipper, the gods rarely bestow it. If the questing character is a faithful follower, he might gain a small item 5% of the time; non-followers of compatible alignments might gain this boon 1% of the time. Non-followers who are forced to undergo the *quest* might gain a magical item once in a generation.

Example: *A thief is trying to reform his larcenous ways. After changing classes to a fighter, he volunteers to undergo a* quest *under the direction of the priest who converted him. The character meets several evil priests who cast* hold person *to no avail. The former thief's shiny new suit of chainmail repels the* hold person, *allowing the questing character to escape. In game terms, the armor confers* free action *as the ring.*

Reward

Sometimes characters perform many great deeds for their god and gain no physical reward. They might be happy, but whereas the priest has something to show for his devotion (his spells and granted powers), the follower has nothing. He must rely on the local priest or his own wisdom to tell him if he is correctly following the path his god wishes. Occasionally, the character's patron rewards the character by enchanting an item that helps the character accomplish his personal goals—as long as they don't conflict with any of the god's own wishes. A reward is a tricky, often two-edged, spontaneous enchantment.

To qualify for this reward, the follower must be true to his alignment and faithful to his patron. It doesn't hurt to attend services regularly, pay a tithe, and convert a few friends or neighbors, either. Although items awarded to commoners are often very minor, non-priest adventurers or NPCs could gain a powerful enchantment. Instead of feeling vindicated, the character is expected to repay the god with further devotion. Losing, giving away, or selling an item enchanted in this way is likely to cause severe misfortune except in very particular circumstances. (Donating the item to a henchman because the character is disabled might not invoke the god's ire.)

Example: *"Poor Pete" is a beggar, but a faithful follower of a god whose portfolio includes modesty or who advocates peace. His god considers him a model follower, regardless of the opinion of the townsfolk. One day Pete finds that his cane confers a* sanctuary *whenever he so much as grasps it, offering him a peaceful defense against truant youths and ungrateful shopkeepers.*

Token Repayments

As the gods give, so do they often take away. A priest, avatar, or other minion of a god might have some cause to remove a powerfully enchanted item from a character. To appease the anger of other gods, sometimes the god makes a token repayment to the character. The nature of the discovery should make it clear who among the party is intended to use the

item. Such items, in fact, are often either sized exactly, bear a personal glyph or family crest, or otherwise identify themselves as already belonging to the character who suffered the loss.

Example: *A chaotic god might not grant the spells for which his priest prays, bestowing instead a custom spell that disenchants magical items. When the party's paladin whips out a holy sword and begins to maim a tribe of trolls, the priest feels the words to the spell coming unbidden to his lips. As he finishes the gestures and raises his holy symbol, the paladin's sword loses its glow and the character feels its accustomed tingle fade. The god takes away the holy sword and simultaneously enchants another item that the character will soon discover. Perhaps a shield appears bearing the paladin's coat of arms.*

These token repayment items are always less powerful than the item taken away. A good way to mollify a player who feels that his character was cheated is to give the character an item that, although less powerful overall, is more immediately useful. The holy sword, while useful for chopping up trolls, wouldn't help the character survive being buried by an avalanche caused by the wizard's spells during the same battle. A *necklace of adaptation* could keep the buried paladin alive until the rest of the party could find and rescue him.

Creation

Various factors involved in the creation of a mundane item can enhance the odds of a spontaneous enchantment. The enchantment might be an effect of exceptional skill, exceptional materials, or the result of using magical tools.

Exceptional Skill

The simplest and least likely method of spontaneous enchantment involving creation is that of exceptional skill. Each time a craftsman makes an item, he has a very tiny chance of creating a magical item. For this enchantment to occur, the item must be flawless. In game terms, the craftsman must state that he is making an item to the best of his ability and then roll a very high successful number on his proficiency check. Often, this number is higher than the character's ability normally allows, causing him to take double or triple the normal fabrication time when making the item, so that he can add a bonus to his check (assuming that you allow a bonus to the check for additional care, cost, and labor). This number should be no less than 17, or 12 for campaigns using PLAYER'S OPTION®: *Skills & Powers*. Such items have a 1% chance of being enchanted. Most of these items (75%) have a minor property that is not listed in the *DMG*. A glazer might craft a magical bottle that can hold as much as a keg of water when filled, rather than creating or gating endless water from another plane. You can choose the powers of the remaining 25% of the items or determine them randomly from among the appropriate items in the DMG or in the campaign.

Example: *Laurel Glen is a small village on a large river and might not need the* decanter of endless water *made by the village glassblower. When the river floods, the townsfolk laugh at the drenched glassblower holding onto a raft with one hand and his precious bottle with the other. Only later, as they thirst for clean, unpolluted water, do they begin to regret their uncharitable behavior.*

Exceptional Materials

Exceptional materials can determine spontaneous enchantment as well, but they must also be expertly crafted. Fine materials used by a craftsman of common skill hold no magic. The materials must be rare or special in some way. Perhaps the glass for the *decanter of endless water* was created when an avatar cast a *fireball* in a sandy location. Perhaps bone used in fashioning a brooch once housed the spirit of a lich.

Exceptional materials often pass on some property associated with their unique qualities. The lich bone brooch might create an *amulet versus undead*. A necklace of giant shark teeth worn by a sahuagin priestess might increase swimming speed or allow her to summon more sharks than usual. Rare precious metals like adamantite generally make an item incredibly strong or bestow simple plusses if used for weapons or armor.

Magical Tools

Craftsmen with magical tools can create magical items in rare circumstances. Some merely enhance proficiency checks, increasing the odds of enchantment by another means. Some special items are specifically made for the creation of other items. The proper use of magical tools might still require special raw materials, techniques, or function only in the hands of a particular race.

Example: *A magical hammer and anvil have many purposes, one of which is to forge* arrows of slaying baatezu. *The items are kept separate: the hammer lies on the elemental plane of water, and fiends guard the anvil deep in the pits of Baator. Also, the hammer's magic is invoked only when employed by a dwarven smith.*

An item enchanted through a traumatic experience might serve to either prevent futher such acts from happening or work to create them.

Psychic Influence

Psionic items, those that are specifically created by psionic characters using empower, are not magical items. These items are entirely different. Psychic influence refers to the affect of raw emotion on the physical world. Positive or negative psychic energy, the result of strong emotions, sometimes affects the world around it.

This method of spontaneous enchantment is somewhat similar to association, but on a different scale. With association, the item gains its magic from another source, but the nature of its power is determined by a long-standing identifiable trait of the character. With psychic influence, the magic of the item is gained by intense emotion (regardless of characteristics or behavior of the individuals involved), and its nature might be determined by something else. An item enchanted through a traumatic experience might serve to either prevent further such acts or work to create them.

Negative psychic energy serves as the catalyst for the creation of some sponta-

neous enchantment. Violent death, although horrible, is too common to leave a psychic aura powerful enough to enchant normal items. A truly tragic death, such as a double suicide based on a mere miscommunication (*à la Romeo and Juliet*) could provide enough psychic energy to create an enchantment. For better examples, consider the heinous acts that cause certain evil characters to be drawn into the Demiplane of Dread and become lords of a domain.

Example: *A common dagger was used to butcher a royal family during a bloody revolution. The dagger might gain the power to cause double damage when used against royalty. It might also heal royalty by touch or burn the owner if he attacks any surviving members of the murdered family.*

Love and devotion are stronger than fear and hatred. Items that represent these emotions or commonly symbolize them might also gain an enchantment through positive psychic energy. Positive psychic energy rarely, if ever, bestows combat bonuses on an item. It rarely affects a weapon at all, in fact. The power should clearly reflect the circumstances that made the item special.

Example: *A lady abducted by orcs drops a gold hairpin in the mud. A farm boy witnesses the event and picks up the hairpin. Taking the item and swearing to return it to the beautiful lady, the youth sets off to rescue her, having many adventures and growing stronger and wiser along the way. If she returns his feelings after he rescues her, the pin might gain a minor enchantment. Specifically, the gold hairpin might alert one character when the other is in danger, it might allow communication between the two, or it might even teleport one character to the other's presence.*

Note that desperation is not an emotion that can bestow an enchantment on an item. A character trying to stay alive just for the sake of avoiding death serves no greater purpose. If the adventure requires that the character stay alive, you should be prepared to fudge dice rolls or allow some other intervention rather than let the player talk you into giving the character a spontaneously enchanted item.

Example: *A PC climbing a cliff slips and falls. The character has seen another PC receive the benefit of spontaneous enchantment as a plot device, and the player hopes to have the same thing happen to him. He claims he's been wearing the same boots for 30 years and wants to know if they can turn into* boots of levitation *on the way down. If the character takes no action other than rubbing his boots and wishing real hard, he better hope he lands on something soft!*

The Enchantment

Once an item has met the criteria for enchantment, and its power and limitations have been decided, all that's left is to actually make it a magical item. The exact nature of the enchantment varies with the source of the enchantment.

An item enchanted by association often shows no visible signs at all. The item becomes stronger, more resistant to mundane damage, and might radiate magic if *detect magic* is cast upon it. At most, normal scratches and wear seem to fade, allowing the item to appear as new.

When an item is created as a magical item, the craftsman often feels like he's in a trance, unaware of the passage of time, almost as if he were controlled by the item instead of the other way around. He feels that his work is special and often refuses to sell the item. He might give it as a gift, but rarely sells an item that carries so much of his spirit.

Items enchanted by divine influence might have the most spectacular enchantment. The item might be the target of the only beam of sunlight to escape a dark cloud cover, it might wash up to shore dry, or it might begin to radiate a blinding light which slowly fades over a turn. The exact sensory effects depend on the god granting the enchantment. A priest of that god would certainly recognize something about the enchantment as the signature of his god.

Items that qualify for enchantment through psychic energy are often distinguished before they become magical and hold a sentimental value to one or more people. The emotional attachment makes the item one that the character is not likely to lose. When the item is exposed to circumstances suitable for spontaneous enchantment, nearby characters might hear a soft orchestra, they might see the item glow with an unearthly light, or see the face of the person with whom they associate the item in a jewel or piece of glass on the item.

Regardless of the specifics, nearby characters (if any) receive no explanation about the event. Wizard and priest characters receive no experience points for creating a magical item if their actions unknowingly enchant an item. The use of the item is ample reward.

General Traits

Most items enchanted spontaneously are miscellaneous items usable by any character. Those that are enchanted by association might work only for the specific character whose use and strong will created the circumstances for its enchantment. Heirlooms might work for any family member, male or female family members only, or for the current patriarch (or matriarch) only.

Certain items are never created spontaneously. Potions, for example, and other one-shot items are off limits. The whole range of tomes, manuals, and scrolls are inappropriate for spontaneous enchantment. Wands (and other items that generally serve no purpose as non-magical items) are rarely used long enough to meet any of the requirements above, and so are never found enchanted spontaneously.

Staves, on the other hand, do appear in mundane form, as a quarterstaff or as a common carrying tool, or a support device. It is in the last form that most spontaneously magical staves appear. A staff might gain an enchantment spontaneously if it meets any of the conditions above.

If you decide to use spontaneous enchantment in your campaign, allow no more than a handful of events to qualify. Since some events create items whose nature prevents them from being discovered and others produce items in the hands of NPCs, the player characters should only rarely gain any of them for permanent use. By keeping the event of spontaneous enchantment rare, you maintain the wonder and awe you have spent so much time creating.

This year Lloyd went to his first GEN CON® Game Fair. It's kind of scary to think about so many people gathered together to leave reality behind for a while and then wander around the streets of a strange city at night. He wonders how many gamers are still lost.

Random Magical Weapon Generator

A DM's Guide to Enchanting Weapons

by Gregory W. Detwiler

illustrated by David Day

CREATING MAGICAL WEAPONS on short notice can be a pain when you're designing new adventures. This is one good reason for the DM to be less than generous with the number of magical weapons he leaves lying around in the dungeon for the PCs to find. However, that's not enough to reduce magical weapon creation to a crawl. What about the magical arms used by major NPCs, particularly those who are allies of the party (and should thus be off-limits for PC looters)? It adds something to the story when your characters can always tell the presence of the noble lord or paladin on the battlefield by the peculiar gleam of his enchanted sword, while a good description of an NPC's favored weapon helps flesh out the character when the PCs encounter him for the first time.

Magical weapons tend to look alike, particularly when the DM is grinding them out to equip a wide array of NPCs or stock the treasure vaults of his newest dungeon. What the DM needs is a system for producing distinctive-looking weapons in a hurry, with little or no chance of identical arms turning up in multiple dragon hoards. The following tables seek to fill this need. They do not address the question of special weapon powers, because the *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide* already does so. Rather, the tables cover the more unusual aspects of a weapon which do not necessarily affect combat, as well as mundane matters such as the weapon's appearance and background.

WEAPONS OF A MAGICAL WORLD

The first thing to determine about a planned magical weapon is how old it is, as what historical era it comes from determines its general design and shape, as well as the language of any runes or weaponsmith's signature on the thing.

The *DUNGEON MASTER Guide* offers a good start with the Equipment By Time Period (Table 23), but it doesn't go nearly far enough with regard to weapons.* Consider ancient times to be two periods: the Stone Age and Classical times, with the dividing point being the appearance of metal weapons. Some weapons, such as the heavy crossbow and all swords, simply cannot be made without metal unless a great deal of magic is used, and swords cannot even be conceived of by a metalless society.

The official AD&D® weapons available in a civilized Stone Age setting are the battle axe, blowgun, long bow, short bow, club, hand crossbow, light crossbow, dagger, dart, flail (horseman's and footman's alike), hand or throwing axe, harpoon, javelin, knife, mace (horseman's and footman's alike), morning star (studded with carnivore teeth, large thorns, etc.), pick (horseman's and footman's alike), quarterstaff, scourge, sickle, sling, spear, staff sling, warhammer, and whip.

In the metal-using period of ancient history, add the composite long and short bows, the light horse lance, the pike (treat as an awl pike, but this is really a plain spearlike weapon, such as the Macedonian sarissa used by the armies of Alexander the Great), the kopesh, the long sword (rare among anyone other than barbarians), the scimitar, the short sword (the most common sword of the period), and the trident. Note that in the Greek, Macedonian, and Roman armies, some older weapons like the club, axe, mace, flail, pick, and blowgun went out of fashion, in which case magical versions of those weapons could be unavailable in ruins from similar cultures even though they had the knowledge to produce them. Any older weapons found there would be either spoils of war or the debris of battle left behind by barbarian auxiliaries, raiders or invaders.

Weapon Characteristics

The characteristics of a weapon consist of its shape, the materials of its construction, and its decorations (if any), as well as its background and any odd powers. The variety can be almost endless, particularly

in a fantasy world, where exotic metals—such as mithril and adamantite, or even the chitin from the exoskeletons of giant arthropods—can be added to the normal materials of our world. If chitinous weapons sound odd, consider a mancatcher made from the claw of a giant crab, or a morning star made from giant praying mantis forearms.

The following tables list shapes and composition (bone or metal, with subclasses such as cold iron and silvered or chaised [gold-inlaid] steel, or patterned steel such as watered or Damascus steel). Viking swords were often made of alternate layers of iron and carbon-free steel, which produced a weapon more resistant to cold than an all-steel weapon, and which also produced a wavy, serpentine pattern in the metal of the blade.

Even the oddest materials can be used to make serviceable weapons, and not always with the aid of magic. For example, copper is a soft metal, yet the ancient Egyptians had a process for making it as hard as bronze or iron by subjecting the blade to intense pressure. Their low-tech method was to place the copper blade between two massive slabs of bone-dry wood, then drench the wood in water. Wood swells when wet, and this swelling can exert incredible force upon the copper blade, creating a metal of extraordinary density. Remember that the next time you see copper or bronze weapons rated as automatically inferior to those of iron or steel (barring magical intervention, of course).

Even the oddest materials can be used to make serviceable weapons, and not always with the aid of magic.

* Incidentally, Table 23 in the *DMG* is wrong about the composite long bow, which was available in ancient times. Basically, the Middle Ages and the Renaissance have every available AD&D® weapon but the kopesh sword, the sling and staff sling, the dart, the blowgun, and—in the Middle Ages—the arquebus. Similarly, the Dark Ages see the use of all weapons but the arquebus and kopesh, the awl pike, the heavy crossbow (light crossbows were used by the Normans near the end of the Dark Ages and were even experimented with in the declining days of the Roman Empire), the blowgun and dart, and the mancatcher.

Table 1
Basic Materials Used in Construction

1 Wood
2 Chitin
3 Stone
4 Bone
5 Metal (see Table 2)
6 Glass (*glassteel*)
7 Crystal
8 Other (ivory, horn or claw, etc.)

Table 2
Basic Metals Used in Construction

1 Copper
2 Bronze
3 Brass
4 Iron (see Table 3)
5 Steel (see Table 3)
6 Gold (enchanted)
7 Silver (enchanted)
8 Electrum (enchanted)
9 Platinum (enchanted)
10 Mithril
11 Adamantite
12 Other (such as cinnibar from the RED STEEL™ setting)

Table 3
Iron/Steel Variants

1 Cold iron
2 Alternate layers of iron and carbon-free steel
3 Regular steel
4 Silvered steel
5 Chaised steel
6 Watered steel
7 High-quality steel (Toledo, Damascus, etc.)
8 Finest steel (like the best samurai swords)

Table 4
Blade Patterns or Appearance

1 Plain
2 Gleaming or reflective
3 Watered steel
4 Serpentine pattern (as with iron and carbon-free steel)
5 Damascus pattern
6 Adornments (see Table 5)

Table 5
Adornments

1 Writing (see Table 6)
2 Decorative symbols
3 Pictures
4 Engravings or bas-reliefs (These are actually gouged out of the metal, which can weaken the weapon if care is not taken, so ceremonial weapons are more likely to have this feature than those which regularly see combat unless powerful magic is used during construction.)
5 External decorations (feathers, scalps, etc.)
6 None

Table 6
Writing (often just the smith's signature and/or the name of the weapon)

1 Hieroglyphics
2 Cuneiform
3 Runes
4 Conventional (to us) writing
5 Pictographs
6 None

Table 7
Haft or Handle Materials

1 Wood
2 Bone
3 Chitin
4 Metal (see Table 10)
5 Ivory
6 Horn
7 Glass (*glassteel*)
8 Crystal

Table 8
Materials For Pommel Decorations

1 Wood
2 Bone
3 Stone (see Table 9)
4 Precious stones
5 Chitin
6 Horn
7 Ivory
8 Metal (see Table 10)
9 Glass (*glassteel*)
10 Crystal
11 Shell (tortoise shell, etc.)
12 Amber

Table 9
Colors of Stones or Precious Stones

1 Blue
2 Green
3 Purple/violet
4 Red
5 Orange
6 Yellow
7 Black
8 White
9 Brown
10 Gray
11 Amber
12 Colorless (like window glass)

Note: If the DM has some time left over, he might want to think up a specific hue, such as blue-green, green-blue, reddish-violet, maroon, etc. The possibilities are nearly endless.

Table 10
Metals Used in Hafts, Handles, and Pommels

1 Copper
2 Bronze
3 Brass
4 Iron
5 Steel
6 Gold
7 Silver
8 Electrum (an alloy of gold and silver)
9 Platinum
10 Mithril
11 Adamantite
12 Other (such as cinnibar)

Table 11
Pommel Shapes

1 Sphere
2 Oval
3 Cube
4 Pyramid
5 Flat Triangle
6 Hemisphere
7 Spindle
8 Acorn
9 Clenched fist
10 Apple or pomegranate (like spears of persian Immortals)
11 Pear
12 Shell (turtle, tortoise, sea shell, etc.)
13 Human head
14 Skull
15 Animal or monster head
16 Animal or monster skull
17 Tooth or fang
18 Holy symbol (good for a paladin's *holy sword*)
19 Beehive
20 Egg (any type)

Table 12
Sword, Knife, and Dagger Hilts

1 No hilt
2 Simple cross guard
3 Basket hilt
4 Cup hilt

Table 13
Mace Head Shapes

1 Spherical
2 Pear-shaped
3 Disk (placed horizontally)
4 Skull-shaped
5 Flanged
6 Oval
7 Animal head
8 Whistling (any of above, with holes drilled through the head to catch the air when swung and make a whistling sound)

Table 14
Arrow, Polearm, and Spear Point Shapes

1 Conventional arrowhead (with projecting edges)
2 Tongue-shaped (broad, short or medium length)
3 Conventional spearhead
4 Long and slender, even width (like awl pike)
5 Long and tapering
6 Mere point (like a point carved from the end of a pole)
7 Equilateral triangle
8 Isosceles triangle (2 equal sides, like partisan head)
9 Spindle-shaped
10 Needle-shaped
11 Barbed (like harpoon)
12 Serrated (any of above, with serrated cutting edge)

Table 15
Axe Heads

1 Square blade
2 Square blade with backspike
3 Double square blade
4 Crescent blade
5 Crescent blade with backspike
6 Double crescent blade
7 Square blade with backspike and spearhead (halberd)
8 Double square blade with spearhead
9 Crescent blade with backspike and spearhead
10 Double crescent blade with spearhead

Table 16
Blade Surface

1 Normal
2 Glistening (as if wet)
3 Dully reflective (see outline, but nothing more)
4 Fully reflective (like mirror)

Table 17
Material For Sheaths, Scabbards, Pouches, and Quivers

1 Wood
2 Leather
3 Fur
4 Tough hide
6 Tanned human (humanoid, demi-human) skin
7 Cloth
8 Metal (solid, mesh mail, chain links, etc.)

Table 18
External Decorations For Weapons, Scabbards, Etc.

1 Feathers
2 Leather strips or leather trimming
3 Strips of fur or fur trimming
4 Strips of cloth or cloth trimming
5 Beads (including precious and semiprecious stones)
6 Human (humanoid, other) scalps
7 Animal or monster teeth
8 Animal or monster claws
9 Holy symbols
10 Carved ornaments (wood, bone, ivory, metal, etc.)
11 Inlaid with precious metal
12 Precious stones set in weapon or scabbard

Table 19
Scenes For Pictures, Engravings, Etc.

1 Symbols (mystical, holy, etc.)
2 Landscape
3 Cemetery or crypt
4 Hunting scene
5 Battlefield
6 Parade
7 Ceremony (religious, coronation, etc.)
8 Storm (blizzard, electrical storm, etc.)
9 Human figures (a royal line, a magical cabal, etc.)
10 Urban scene
11 Weapons (as in an armory)
12 One or more animals or monsters

Table 20
Special Properties of Weapon Heads or Blades

1 Illumination (constant or on command)(see Table 21)
2 Sound made (at will or when target is struck)(see Table 22)
3 Always sharp
4 Rustproof (includes rust monster attacks, etc.)
5 Immune to special attacks (fire, frost, acid, etc.)
6 Netcutter (always severs rope or net on first stroke)
7 Potbreaker (always shatters bottles, jars, etc.)
8 Invulnerable to breakage (crushing blow, etc.)
9 Gives off fiery sparks when striking (no damage)
10 Snowflakes or ice shards fall when striking
11 Gives off electrical sparks when striking
12 Flash of light when striking

Table 21
Type of Illumination

1 No illumination
2 Glow (just enough to let you find it in the dark)
3 Gleaming, sheds light in a 5' radius
4 Sheds light in 10' radius
5 Directs narrow beam (like a bulls-eye lantern)
6 Only lights on command (any of above)

Table 22
Sounds

1 Muffled (blows make only half as much noise as normal)
2 Silent (no noise at all when parrying or striking)
3 Noisemaker (makes twice as much noise when striking)
4 Loud hum when swung or thrust
5 Chiming sound when striking or parrying
6 Human shouts or screams when striking or parrying
7 Animal or monster roars or growls when striking
8 Drum sounds when striking or parrying
9 Thunder when striking (rumbles when swung or thrust)
10 Gale (sound of great winds in distance when swung or thrust)

Table 23
Weapon Intelligence

1 Instinctual animal (just enough to seek out targets)
2 Higher animal (like a pet dog)
3 Low (dim-witted human mentality)
4 Normal human intelligence
5 Human genius
6 Superintelligent (like dragons and extraplanar beings)

Table 24
Means of Communication For Weapon

1 No means of communication; unintelligent
2 Mental impressions (wielder only)
3 Personal telepathy (wielder only)
4 Mass mental impressions (everyone in 10' radius)
5 Mass telepathy (everyone in 10' radius)
6 Normal speech

Table 25
Location In Monster's Lair

1 Wielded by monster
2 Protruding from monster's body
3 Inside monster's body (last owner was swallowed whole)
4 Inside treasure chest
5 Hanging on or leaning against wall
6 Buried under pile of debris
7 Lying in plain sight (unintelligent monsters only)
8 Hidden in secret compartment

Table 26
Original Owner of Weapon

1 King or other ruler
2 Lesser nobility
3 General or other high-ranking military person
4 Regular soldier
5 Mercenary officer
6 Mercenary soldier
7 Freelance adventurer
8 Master thief
9 High priest (wouldn't apply for some weapons)
10 Paladin or ranger
11 Demihuman or humanoid warrior or ruler
12 Giant, extraplanar being, or other

Table 27
Weapon's Main Claim to Fame

1 Symbol of rulership
2 Seen in war at all major battles
3 Conspicuous bodyguard's weapon
4 Well-known monster-slayer
5 Deadly assassin's weapon
6 Source of magical or divine power
7 Used to kill enemy hero or ruler in battle
8 Personality (intelligent weapons)

Table 28
Weapon's Alignment

1 Chaotic Good
2 Lawful Good
3 Neutral Good
4 Chaotic Evil
5 Lawful Evil
6 Neutral Evil
7 Chaotic Neutral
8 Lawful Neutral
9 True (Absolute) Neutral
10 No Alignment

Table 29
Intelligent Weapon Personality

1 Generally bloodthirsty and aggressive
2 Calm, sagelike
3 Coldly calculating
4 Warmly seductive (with wielder)
5 Deferentially friendly or adoring (like human sidekick)
6 Buoyantly optimistic or upbeat
7 Abject pessimist
8 Greedy
9 Hot-tempered; quick to anger
10 Friendly; treats wielder as an equal
11 Patronizing; always "knows better" than wielder
12 Friendly but paternal; acts as wielder's mentor
13 Sensitive; sulks a lot
14 Cynical
15 Pious; holier than thou (especially paladin's weapon)
16 Maniacal hatred for target race (special slayer weapon)
17 Unctuous; silver-tongued flatterer
18 Boisterous clown
19 Craven, cowardly (thief's or assassin's weapon)
20 Cavalier-type; too proud to retreat

Table 30
Cursed Melee Weapon Effects

1 Backbiter (weapon curves backward to strike wielder)
2 Dodger (consciously swerves to avoid striking foe)
3 Seeks escape (tries to twist out of wielder's hand)
4 Weapon sticks in scabbard or sheath
5 Weapon sticks to whatever it strikes
6 General noisemaker (sounds attract monsters)
7 Loudmouth (gives information to intelligent foes)
8 Weapon emits odor of tasty food (attracts monsters)
9 Flash of light blinds wielder when blow struck
10 Weapon tries to control wielder telepathically
11 Berserker (wielder goes berserk, attacks comrades)
12 Backstabber (wielder stabs comrades in back)
13 Exudes grease (wielder can't get a grip on it)
14 Lightning (shocks wielder when touched)
15 Flame curse (burns wielder when touched)
16 Fragile (shatters on impact)
17 Explodes (explosion does double damage)
18 Special power employed against wielder
19 Acid (corrodes scabbard or sheath)
20 Troglodyte weapon (sudden stench makes wielder nauseous and too weak to fight)

Table 31
Cursed Missile Weapon Effects

1 Dodger (consciously swerves to avoid striking foe)
2 Missile sticks to hand or launcher
3 Missile sticks in quiver or pouch
4 Boomerang (missile does 180° turn, flies at firer)
5 Traitor (missile swerves to attack party member)
6 Explodes (explosion does double damage)
7 Pulls punches (missile falls short of target)
8 Alarm (gives warning when sniping attack attempted)
9 Flash of light before firing ruins shooter's aim
10 Escape (will twist out of fingers, sling, pouch, etc.)
11 Exudes grease (wielder can't get a grip on it)
12 Screams upon launching (spoils firer's aim)
13 Elastic energy field (bounces harmlessly off target)
14 Acid (corrodes quiver, pouch, sheath, etc.)
15 Favors foe (no bonuses apply against particular race)
16 Light in 15' radius (reveals sniper's position)
17 Growth missile (target gains one or more hit dice)
18 Anti-magic missile (target gains 10% magic resistance)
19 *Invisibility* missile (turns target invisible)
20 Disenchanter (acts as *rod of cancellation* against magic missile launcher or other magic missile in quiver or pouch)

The tables are mostly self-explanatory, but a few features need clarification. Those weapons that have the netcutter or potbreaker powers *always* sever mundane cords of any sort or shatter nonmagical pots and other containers with no die rolls necessary. Enchanted targets, such as a *rope of entanglement* or an *alchemy jug*, gain a saving throw vs. disintegration or crushing blow, respectively.

Although the majority of magical weapons are useful and benign, the tables include many useful powers for cursed weapons. The DM is encouraged to come up with novel means of using these powers. For instance, the weapon that emits the scent of savory food mainly does so to attract monsters. Consider, however, the effect when the party is lost and starving in a barren wilderness, with no food, no chance of finding any, and no clerics capable of casting *create food and water*, being constantly forced to smell the odors of delicious food when they are unable to forage any. This can easily lead to strife or even mutiny in the party, and if worst comes to worst, the weapon's owner might well wind up being eaten by his former comrades.

Sample Weapons

Here are a few examples of weapons made with the above tables:

Lion of Glory

A *mace +4* whose bronze head is shaped like the head of a lion. Its handle is of well-polished ebony wood, and it is a horseman's (charioteer's) weapon. This mace was once wielded by the pharaohs of Egypt (or your fantasy world's equivalent) in the Classical Period. *Lion of Glory* constantly sheds light in a 10' radius, and whenever it hits something, it gives voice to a loud roar, exactly like the roar of a lion. If it should ever be lost or stolen, the realm itself would be in an uproar.

Grave Dart

This is a *dart +3* with the added benefit that anyone hit by it must save vs. death magic or else die instantly, losing half his hit points on a successful save. Carved from a single piece of wight bone, it is feathered with the feathers of a stirge, while cryptic magical symbols dot it here and there. The *grave dart* was commissioned for a powerful necromancer who achieved archmage status, as darts are among the few weapons that wizards can use. It was lost when the forces of Good defeated his mostly undead army; adventurers who venture onto the scene of the final battle find it stuck inside the skull of a lammasu (its last victim). A potent weapon for evil, if someone of good or neutral alignment hurls it, it turns around in midair and flies back to strike the caster.

Fang in the Wound

This is a *long sword +1* that is also a *sword of wounding*. Made of the finest watered steel, its name and the signature of its swordsmith are engraved on either side of the base of the blade in runes. It has a cup hilt, also of watered steel, to protect the wielder's hand, and the ivory handle is engraved with battle scenes on both sides. Its pommel is a hunk of amber carved in the shape of a clenched human fist. The steel blade is so reflective that you can use it as a narrow mirror, and it emits flashes of light (not blinding, but impressive) whenever it hits a target.

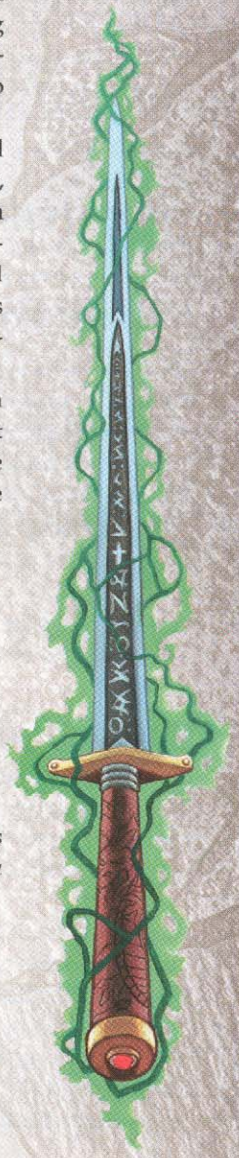
Fang in the Wound is chaotic good, having been created for a powerful lord of the same alignment, and is currently buried at the bottom of the treasure heap gathered by the huge ancient blue dragon that slew him. Anyone who grasps it is contacted by the blade via its telepathic powers; it has the intelligence of a normal human and treats its wielder as an equal. Although made for killing, it knows it can't kill anyone when its wielder is dead and calmly calculates the odds in any battle, giving advice on when it is proper to retreat. It can't illuminate an area but glows in the dark on command so that its wielder can find it.

Its scabbard, which is buried at the opposite end of the same pile of treasure the blade itself is under, is made of fragrant cedar wood which has been magically strengthened so it neither rots nor shatters, and which always keeps sharp any long sword blade stored inside it. A ball of electrum decorates the tip of the scabbard, while the mouth is highlighted by trimming made of winter wolf fur.

This article isn't the last word in magical item design, but it can save the hard-pressed DM a great deal of time: time that can be used in making the rest of the upcoming adventure more memorable for his players.

Greg Detwiler sends us so many article proposals that we are beginning to suspect that he has a random article generator.

The majority of magical weapons are useful and benign; the DM is encouraged to come up with novel means of using these powers.



A Treasure Trove of Tomes

Books Both Magical & Mundane from the GREYHAWK® Setting

The Company of Lost Swords is raiding an evil wizard's stronghold, when they come across the wizard's library. Its shelves are packed with hundreds of old, musty books. "I throw all the books on the floor so I can look behind them for treasure," says the player with the fighter. "Hundreds of books, huh?" says the player with the mage. "I read the first ten titles. What are they?"

by SCOTT CASPER

illustrated by Pete Venters

The DM in this situation faces two problems that are common when PCs deal with books. The first is that players seldom value books of a non-magical nature. The second is that DMs often find themselves improvising books because they haven't given enough thought as to what books are available on their game worlds.

The 20 books described below can suit almost any AD&D® game setting with a few name changes. Altering them for the FORGOTTEN REALMS® and RAVENLOFT® is easy. For the DRAGONLANCE® setting, with its extensive history, the subject matter of some of these books requires greater modification, particularly for those books dealing with clerics. In a SPELLJAMMER® campaign, books from Oerth could wind up on any world.

Much of the information for the following books comes from just a few sources. These sources are named at the end of this article and should prove useful for DMs wishing to expand this list. Changing names is simple, and the dictionaries used for this article are included in the bibliography. Designing new game mechanics to go with non-magical books is trickier. Game balance should be considered before PCs get any new books in their hands.

There is one other important consideration for the DM—the existence of the printing press. There is no precedent to suggest that the printing press exists in the GREYHAWK setting, and this article was written with the assumption that it does not. However, there are printing presses in the FORGOTTEN REALMS and RAVENLOFT settings, and they would be a natural for tinker gnomes in the DRAGONLANCE campaign. In any world with printing presses, books should be more commonplace and less expensive. Price reduction should be at least one-half, and at most one-tenth, of those prices suggested below. The exact amount depends on how widespread the use of the printing press is and, ultimately, how accessible the DM has decided to make these books.

Preface

Unless otherwise noted, the following books are written in Common. They were all written by humans for humans. This not only represents the humanocentric outlook of Oerth but provides an easier range of material to cope with in a short article.

Also, the following is terminology either used in the descriptions below or mentioned as terminology a DM can use to describe further volumes. **Line numbers** are the number of lines of text on a page, or at least the average number when variance occurs. **Clasps** are attached to the outside of a book and are used to keep the book firmly closed. **Vellum** books require clasps to keep the pages from warping. **Embossing** leaves a raised pattern on the surface of leather. **Margin decorations** can take a great many forms, from images of entwined vines, to dragons, to Celtic-like criss-crossing lines. **Initials** are the large, hand-painted letters at the start of each page. If they are shown inside a painted box, that is known as its field. **Woodcut prints** are made by carving and inking a piece of wood and pressing it to the page. This process has become more common than hand-painting illustrations, as the woodcut can be reused in a variety of books, and even in the same book. In the hands of a good artist, woodcuts can look quite exceptional. (For brevity, the names of artists are not given in this article.) The process of *copperplate engraving* is similar, with a design being etched in copper instead of wood. The process is still rarely used on Oerth, due to the more expensive material and the more specialized skill required.

Note: Whenever a book allows a non-proficient character to use a proficiency, the noted modifier applies to the normal ability score base, not half of that value as is the case for non-proficient use without the benefit of these tomes.

The Books

Doctrinal Commentary

By Dantus Allegrini circa 410 CY

Copied by Elmorus, city scribe of Torrich, Great Kingdom, in 495 CY

Suggested Price: 550 gp

Physical Description: The red leather, embossed covers to this book measure 6" × 9", with the title and author both written in gold leaf on the front cover. The book is 562 pages long, with 26-line pages, and has hand-painted margin decorations depicting monsters hiding behind line patterns. There are numerous woodcut prints detailing characters and scenes from the book.

Contents: The story begins with the author, Dantus Allegrini, chased up a mountainside by werewolves. He is rescued by a deva from the outer planes, named Vironon. Dantus craves a second favor, that Vironon transport him to the outer planes so he may be reunited with the soul of his lost wife, Beccora. Vironon agrees to act as a guide, but first must deposit the souls of the werewolves in the Abyss. Once there, the two travelers find their way back blocked, and they must navigate three layers of the Abyss before they escape back into the Astral Plane. From there, they go the Twin Paradises, and then to the Seven Heavens looking for Beccora. He is, at last, successful and apparently allowed to remain with her at the story's end.

Game Mechanics: Any reader who makes a Wisdom check realizes the story is deeply allegorical of politics in the Great Kingdom. With this insight, one can make local history non-weapon proficiency checks at a –5 penalty. The book must be consulted for each question to be answered, as the proficiency is not actually gained. No bonus is accrued for those already having the proficiency.

The descriptions of those planes mentioned are accurate. (The story may be fictional, but Dantus was a 7th-level mage.) Concepts such as the ideology of the planes, the Blood Wars, and rival factions are alluded to. Future PLANESCAPE® travelers would do well to study this so they won't start out clueless.

Goodmonth

By Gironi Boccanegra in 453 CY

Copied by Heironymous Fildi, city scribe of Eastfair, North Province, in 517 CY

Suggested Price: 620 gp

Physical Description: A gold leaf border decorates the spine and both covers of this brown, leather-bound, 8" × 12" book. The book is 662 pages long, with 30-line pages and wide margin decorations on each page. Woodcut print illustrations are used repetitively at the top and bottom of pages. A red velvet bookmark is attached.

Contents: This is a well-known collection of 100 popular short stories, derived from oral tradition, which were collected by Boccanegra and set in a framing story. The framing story deals with ten members of the idle rich of Eastfair, paired into five couples, who decide to go on a trip while the local clerics try to stamp out an outbreak of plaque in town. They adjourn to a villa outside the city, where they eat, drink,

and engage in storytelling to pass the time for an entire month (which happens to be Goodmonth, hence the title). All the stories they tell deal with love in some manner, and some are quite bawdy. All the stories are also generally agreed to be both witty and entertaining.

Game Mechanics: A character already possessing the etiquette nonweapon proficiency may, after making a successful etiquette proficiency check, and under appropriate circumstances, gain a +1 bonus to encounter reactions by quoting freely from this popular book. Appropriate circumstances might be dinner parties, chatting with tradesmen, or anything else at the DM's discretion.

Designing new game mechanics to go with non-magical books can be tricky. Game balance should be considered before PCs get new books in their hands.

Historical Reign of Ulek

By Geohegan Munt circa 50 CY
Copied by Tommas Malpas, freescribe of the Duchy of Ulek, in 457 CY

Suggested Price: 375 gp

Physical Description: This 7" × 9" tome has 328 vellum, 38-line pages between reddish-brown leather covers. The covers have clasps and red velvet lining inside the covers. The front cover displays the title in gold leaf, and the interior is decorated with gold-painted margin decorations and edge paintings.

Contents: While *Crosse Ways* (see below) dealt with history objectively, Reign of Ulek romanticizes one of the most popular stories from Ulek history. It tells of Count Cartair, the most beloved ruler of the County of Ulek. Cartair fought both armies of orcs and Keolanders, aided by his magic sword (Nurbilac), his magic shield (Predwin), and his three faithful knights (Cainon—a human, Hulewel—an elf, and Brantom—a dwarf). Cartair sired a son, Mulroy, by his cousin-bride, Gwenhara. This was the doom of Cartair, as Mulroy was seduced by a succubus and turned against his father. The two killed each other in battle.

The story of Count Cartair has been copied by many scribes, but Malpas' copies are both the most lavish and the most corrupted. Malpas almost doubled the length of the original story, apparently making up many details on his own. Fortunately, the story does read better with his additions. Many scribes since Malpas have kept his additions.

Game Mechanics: The story of Count Cartair stirs the patriotism of all men from Ulek. Bards can inspire Ulek troops with a +3 bonus to morale, instead of +2, if their inspiration draws from the Count Cartair story.

(**Language Note:** This book is written with several characters unique to Keolandish writing, thus non-Keoish readers suffer a –1 penalty to read/write nonweapon proficiency checks when reading it.)

Reflections of Our Mother

By Rolutir, Ovate of Beory, in the County of Ulek, in 538 CY

Suggested Price: 125 gp

Physical Description: This 8" × 12" book contains 137 40-line sheets of parchment. Its wooden covers are bound with wooden rings, with the title written on parchment affixed to the inside front cover. The pages are plain and unadorned.

Contents: This book is divided into 23 chapters, after a short prologue, that cover the teachings of Beory the Oerth Mother in regards to farming, human behavior (in parables using animal characters), and a philosophy of reverence toward nature. The book touches on druidism but reveals few of its secrets.

Game Mechanics: The chapters on farming are particularly concise and informative. Reading this book gives anyone who already possesses the agriculture non-weapon proficiency a permanent +1 bonus to that proficiency.

The Book of Hours

By an anonymous priest of Dellub circa 300 CY
Copied by Didrias Longhand, freescribe of Littleberg, Furyondy, in 405 CY

Suggested Price: 420 gp

Physical Description: The plain brown leather covers of this book measure 7" × 9" and are clasped. The book has 365 vellum pages of 25 lines each, with narrow, painted border decorations. These paintings, beautifully rendered, depict various famous persons and events.

Contents: The original author went to great pains to chronicle important historical events, recording them under the day they happened, with entries for every day of the year. Great divination magic was apparently used to determine the exact hour of some crucial events in history, such as how the Overking was crowned at Rauxes at two in the afternoon. What few detractors the book has among contemporary sages have claimed that no magical divination can be so precise, and that the hours were arbitrarily assigned. Most entries in the book deal with the Kingdoms of Furyondy, Keoland, and Veluna, though Nyrond and the Great Kingdom are also frequently mentioned.

The illustrations of the Longhand copies are said to be reproductions of the originals, though the Longhand illustrations are clearly in a more contemporary art style.

Game Mechanics: *The Book of Hours* is an excellent reference tool for PCs with or without the ancient history nonweapon proficiency. PCs who have the proficiency may make their checks with a +1 bonus if they consult the book

for at least one hour beforehand. PCs without the proficiency may consult the book to answer simple questions, such as when some important event took place. These PCs must consult the book for 1–4 hours beforehand and may then make an ancient history check at a –2 penalty. The book never bestows any permanent bonus.

The Courwood Travelers

By Geohegan Chausard in 459 CY
Copied by Noxton Miller, freescribe of Jurnre, County of Ulek, in 522 CY

Suggested Price: 300 gp

Physical Description: This 7" × 10" book has red leather covers embossed with a gold leaf design resembling the geographic layout of the County of Ulek. There are 342 paper pages of 34 lines, many of which sport low-quality woodcut prints.

Contents: This collection of 23 short stories, with its now-famous framing story, has surpassed in popularity the earlier *Goodmonth*, from which *Travelers* owes some of its material. The framing story tells of 23 travelers, from all over the County of Ulek, who wish to reach Courwood, in Celene, to drink from a magical spring. They get as far as the Lortmil Mountains when they are stopped at an unnamed village at the mouth of the Tringlee Pass. The village elder demands as their toll one story from each of them about their travels. The travelers quickly become competitive and try to outdo each other's tales. Some of the stories are romantic, some are pious, but most are bawdy.

Game Mechanics: The benefits of reading this book are identical as for reading *Goodmonth*. The elves of Courwood are getting sick of humans trying to enter Celene and find the spring mentioned in this book. They deny its existence, but are they telling the truth?

The Dance of Nerull

By anonymous author circa 230 CY
Copied by anonymous circa 450 CY

Suggested Price: 30 gp (80 gp for rare version)

Physical Description: This 6" × 8" book has plain black leather covers. It contains 43 8-line paper pages and 40 woodcut prints.

Contents: Copies of this book are quite common and as popular with commoners as they are hated by civic leaders. The books usually consist of 40 illustrations showing Nerull—the skeletal, scythe-wielding god of death—dragging away men and women of various lofty professions to their deaths. There is always some printed dialogue of the mortals complaining that their time has come too soon, with some pithy response from Nerull.

One rare version of the *Dance* is mentioned here, a copy wherein the figures are not only handsomely painted, but apparently bear striking resemblances to important figures of the fifth century. The first page is a written apology by the copier, who claims his wish was not to offend.

Priests of good faiths often try to ban this book, claiming that it encourages worship of an evil deity. Defenders of the book balk, arguing that it teaches an important lesson about mortality.

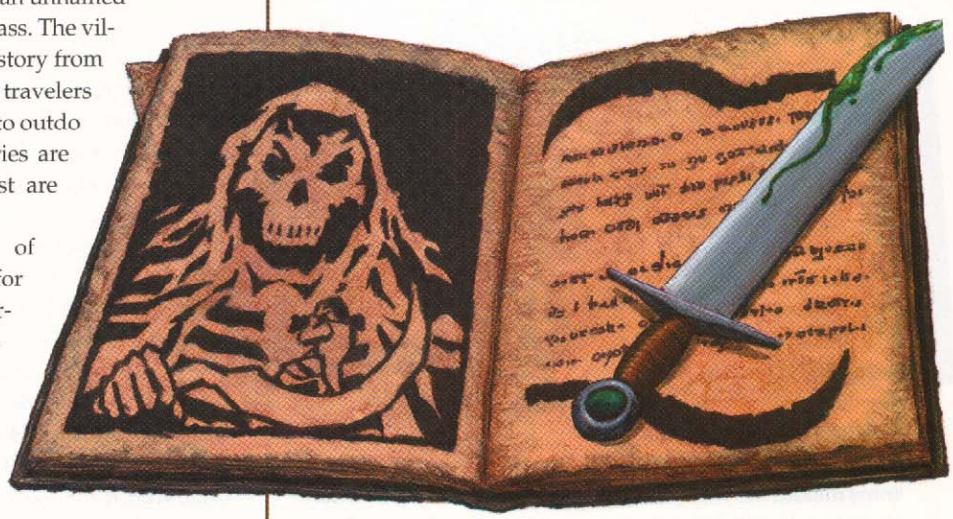
Game Mechanics: Anyone with the Religion proficiency who reads this book always recognizes the image of Nerull without making checks. Also, PCs who make a successful religion check at a –4 penalty know that worshippers of Nerull carry copies of the *Dance* upside-down to identify themselves to other worshippers.

The Fables of Dimbles and Dinges

By Ibn Al-Muqaffa of Ekbir, in 349 CY
Copied by Ramon Bealer of Verbobonc in 415 CY

Suggested Price: 340 gp

Physical Description: This book measures 9" × 11" and contains 322 paper pages of 42 lines. Its covers are reddish-brown leather bound with brass bands, lined on the inside with blue velvet. The title is inlaid on the cover in brass letters. The pages have flowery border decorations in green ink.



Contents: This book is a collection of ancient fables, probably of Baklunish origin, which have now become popular as far east as the free city of Greyhawk. The fables are told as part of a dialogue between a king and a philosopher. There are 22 fables in all, and each features a pair of wolves named Dimble and Dinges. The role of the wolves varies from main characters to cameos. Each fable ends with a helpful moral, like "never laugh at an orc, for the insulted orc will find allies." The framing story of the king and the philosopher has no plot and, in the Bealer translation, is ignored after the 21st fable.

Game Mechanics: Conceivably, a PC could be given a +1 bonus to encounter reactions for quoting from this book when saying something wise would be appropriate. This would be a good place for DMs to give subtle clues about things PCs should not be doing (such as insulting orcs).

The Peasant's Wedding

By an anonymous author circa 325 CY
Copied by Kendall, wandering bard, in 506 CY

Suggested Price: 20 gp

Physical Description: This small, thin book measures 5" × 7" and contains 28 pages between parchment covers. The paper pages average 22 lines per page and feature skimpy border decorations. The front cover simply has a letter "K" upon it.

Contents: This popular poem comes from the oral traditions of the Shield Lands/Bandit Kingdoms area. It is 550 lines long, and deals with the wedding of a young peasant couple named Bezek and Mesti. This bawdy farcefocuses on the wedding night, and the wedding feast that ends up in a brawl. Plays are often performed based on this poem.

Game Mechanics: Bards can benefit from this poem, receiving a +1 bonus to encounter reactions from the audience right after performing it.

In any world with printing presses,

books should be more common

and less expensive.

Levain's Romance

By Gerval Bussey in 410 CY
Copied by Jean Revelar, sage of Chendl, in 495 CY

Suggested Price: 300 gp

Physical Description: The brown leather covers on this tome measure 8" × 10", and the front cover and spine display the title and author in gold leaf with flourishes. The book has one clasp. There are 286 paper 44-line pages with scant border decoration and three dozen excellent copperplate prints.

Contents: *Levain's Romance* is a popular poem of social satire 1,225 verses long. Levain is a peasant who is mistaken for a mighty wizard. Levain is sought after by the courts of Furyondese royalty, as well as several churches and wizards' guilds. These factions plot against each other, soon forgetting what they needed a mighty wizard for in the first place. Goblin troops are slowly invading the Kingdom throughout the poem. Levain courts and weds a noblewoman named Vaine Gloire and sires six children by her who are such little monsters that the goblins are terrified of them and flee.

In addition to the quality illustrations and fine penmanship, this edition boasts 83 short songs based on the Levain story (musical notations are distinguished by red ink), and two separate poems are included which essentially summarize the larger work.

Game Mechanics: *Levain's Romance* is most popular in its native Furondy (given the constant and real threat of goblin invasions from the Horned Society). It could be of use to PCs with the etiquette proficiency, giving a +1 bonus to some encounter reactions (see *Goodmonth* and other titles).

The Travels of Marek Polstar

By Marek Polstar in 398 CY
Copied by Tobyn Polstar, court scribe of Radigast City, County of Urnst, in 496 CY

Suggested Price: 280 gp

Physical Description: A starburst atop the mast of a cog—the family crest of the Polstars—is embossed on the front and back covers of this 6" × 9" tome. Between the brown leather covers are 328 paper 30-line pages with red-painted initials and margin decorations depicting fantastic monsters.

Contents: The subject matter of this book is controversial because the Polstars have long claimed it to be true. Marek Polstar had to flee the Theocracy of the Pale, his original home, to avoid imprisonment after the initial book's release.

The story tells of a caravan heading west, across the Flanaess and through the Dry Steppes, in search of a land beyond the Sea of Dust. They found trading with the Steppe nomads profitable and continued on until they reached the Celestial Imperium of Kucera Kyrios. The caravan was attacked by ankhegs, and only Marek and two relatives were rescued by Kyrios' soldiers. The Polstars were accepted as ambassadors in the court of Kyrios, and lived there for years—enjoying a life of luxury and educating Kyrios in the ways of the east. Finally, the Polstars learned that Kyrios hoped to someday invade the eastern world, and the Polstars made a daring escape so that they could warn the Flanaess. They fled the Celestial Imperium with a fortune in gems, which they used to buy their way back, spending years to elude pursuit so Kyrios could not track them.

While the plot in summary may seem exciting, most of the book is a travel guide to the Dry Steppes and the Celestial Imperium, with only slim references to the underlying plot.

Game Mechanics: The obvious benefit here is for PCs to use the book to follow the path the Polstars took. The information about the Dry Steppes is still fairly accurate, and a party's chance of getting lost there should drop 10% if aided by the book. Whether or not the Celestial Imperium ever existed is purely up to the DM.

The Wye Canon

By Jenkin Wye in 507 CY
Copied by anonymous cleric in 542 CY

Suggested Price: 275 gp

Physical Description: The holy symbols of Pelor, Rao, and Zilchus are embossed on the front, brown leather cover of this book. The book measures 7" × 8" and has 363 paper 34-line pages. Each page has modest margin decorations and red-painted initials on gold fields. The first page is a copperplate print of Rao.

Contents: *The Wye Canon* is the first known collection of religious texts written in the Common tongue. Wye was a bishop in the church of Rao and the most active pantheon

supporter in Jurnre at that time. The pantheon movement sought to organize the clergies of the more powerful good gods into a Church of the Greater Good. These reformists saw this as the best way to stave off the increasing power of Iuz, Oerth's resident evil demigod. *The Wye Canon* attempted to combine the sacred writings of the seven gods represented in the pantheon into a coherent whole. The pantheon movement has yet to be successful, but what it has inadvertently accomplished is making religious texts more available to the masses. The gods represented herein are Pelor (sun god), Rao (god of peace), Ulaa (goddess of mountains), Zilchus (god of commerce), Heironeous (god of justice), Pholtus (god of law), and St. Cuthbert (god of wisdom).

Game Mechanics: The Canon is a reference tool. PCs who do not have the religion non-weapon proficiency can use the book to make proficiency checks. The Canon must be consulted for 2–7 hours immediately beforehand, and the check is made at a –2 penalty. Questions must pertain to one the seven gods listed above, and it is left to the DM's discretion whether or not the answer is in the book. If the book is studied the same way by a PC with the religion proficiency, the PC gains a +1 bonus to the roll.

Crosse Ways of Ulek

By Andreas Wythe in 155 CY

Copied by Fentol, scribe of St. Cuthbert's church in Jurnre, in 456 CY

Suggested Price: 140 gp (per volume)

Physical Description: There are four volumes to this work, each in a brown leather cover embossed with the heraldic symbol of the County of Ulek (a rearing unicorn) upon the front. Each volume measures 7" × 9" and has 100 to 110 vellum pages. The pages have 36 lines, green-painted margin patterns, and 20 repetitive woodcut prints.

Contents: The four volumes of the *Crosse Ways* compose a geographical and historical treatise of the County of Ulek unrivaled until the much later works of Pluffet Smedger. However, the volumes are written in octosyllabic couplets and rhyme inconsistently. Vol. 1 (400–500 OR) details the castles of the early rulers of Ulek and lists the major battles of the Goblin War in which the Ulek armies forced the goblins and orcs back into the Lortmils. Vol. 2 (500–600 OR) glosses over the rule of Count Cartair, who ruled the County of Ulek, and focuses on the political strife between the three Ulek countries. Fortifications along the Kewl and Old Rivers are detailed. Vol. 3 (600 OR–55 CY) deals mainly with the Principality of Ulek and the power struggle at that time between dwarves and gnomes. Vol. 4 (55 CY–155 CY) ends with the three Ulek kingdoms strongly allied but overshadowed by the growing Kingdoms of Keoland and Aerdy.

Game Mechanics: Because the useful data that can be gleaned from these volumes is concealed in flowery verse, only a reader with a 12 or higher Intelligence may benefit. Any such reader consulting a complete set of these volumes may make an ancient history proficiency check at a –2 penalty, or at a +2 bonus if the proficiency is already possessed. Any answers sought in the text must pertain to the Ulek kingdoms during those time periods mentioned. The ancient history proficiency is not permanently gained and can only be used immediately after 3–8 hours of study. There is no proficiency-related benefit for having less than all four volumes. However, each volume is accurate enough to draw a map from, and several of the old fortifications mentioned have been abandoned and overrun with monsters.

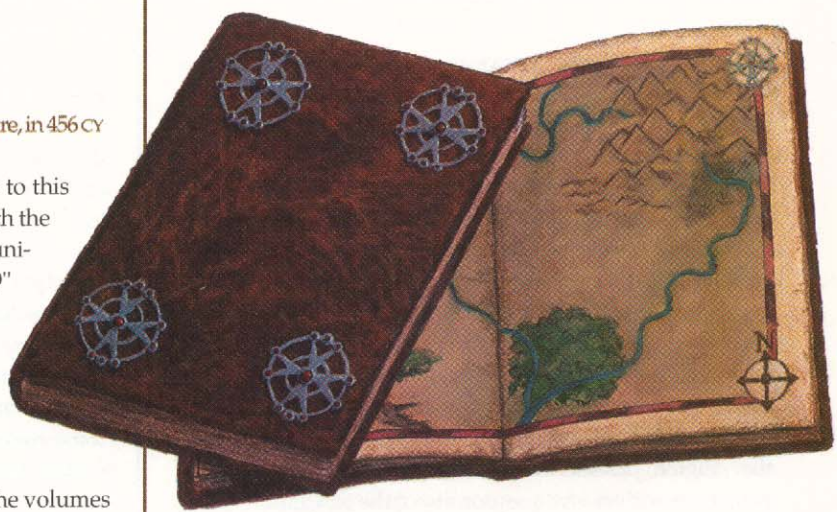
(**Language Note:** These volumes were written using several now-outdated characters unique to a Keoish alphabet, thus non-Keoish readers suffer a –1 penalty to their reading/writing proficiency checks when reading these volumes).

Herbal Recipes and Remedies

By Sactus Signa (believed to be a penname) in 576 CY

Suggested Price: 150 gp

Physical Description: The 9" × 11" parchment cover of this thin book has its title, with flourishes, penned on it with red ink. There are 106 paper, 45-line pages in this book, with both hand-drawn illustrations (mainly in the recipe section), and six copperplate prints (identifying 18 herbs in the remedies section).



Contents: The two sections of the book are each divided into two chapters. In the recipes section, the chapters are "soups" and "sauces," while the chapters in the remedies section are "wounds" and "illnesses." The often poorly-drawn illustrations in this book may not whet the appetite, but the recipes are accepted as excellent by all who try them. Many of the recipes are rare and unusual, like the cream of campestri soup and the rich Velunese sauce. The curative section is very informative, though perhaps a little too all-inclusive, as the author seems to believe in the healing power of certain stones (something any cleric can discern as an old wives' tale).

Game Mechanics: The recipes section gives anyone with the cooking proficiency a +1 bonus. The remedies section gives anyone with the herbalism proficiency a +1 bonus to checks, or gives anyone without the proficiency a herbalism check equal to half the PC's Wisdom (rounded down). If the book is studied for healing, it can bestow a +1 bonus to healing rolls as well. However, the book calls for 10-40 gp worth of gems and herbs, and the bonus is not gained without them.

History of the Priests of the Church of St. Cuthbert

By Dehm Brenner in 575 CY

Copied by Alard Fenham, curate of St. Cuthbert's Church, Admundfort, Shield Lands, in 466 CY

Suggested Price: 140 gp (per volume)

Physical Description: The two volumes of this work are 144 and 163 pages long respectively. Both volumes are 8" × 10" and have brown leather covers with four starbursts embossed on the front. Each book has vellum, 34-line pages with wide red and green-painted margin decorations.

The terminology mentioned here can also be used to describe further volumes.

Contents: Both volumes deal with almost two centuries (up to 150 CY) of missionary work by the clergy of St. Cuthbert in the north, specifically the Shield Lands, Bandit Kingdoms, and the Duchy of Tenh. Volume 1 is composed of biographies of the zealous clerics who spread their faith to these violent lands. Many of them died martyrs, and all of their stories are violent, given the St. Cuthbert approach of bashing first and converting later. Volume 2 is an atlas of the lands mentioned in Volume 1, with lengthy descriptions of cities, peoples, and folklores in those areas. There is also information on the strengths and weaknesses of the local militaries and rival religions in the region.

Game Mechanics: Reading Volume 1 allows PCs without the religion proficiency to make religion checks at a –3 penalty to answer any question about the St. Cuthbert faith, or it confers a +1 bonus to those already possessing the proficiency. Reading Volume 2 gives a +1 bonus to ancient history checks in regards to the three areas named above if the proficiency is already possessed, and offers no bonus to PCs without it. The information is far too outdated to be of much current value.

Ordained Makedom

By Rottcher Baggett in 366 CY

Copied by Marc Draken, scholar of Grey College, Greyhawk City, in 474 CY

Suggested Price: 340 gp

Physical Description: The title in gold leaf decorates the spine and front cover of this book. The covers measure 7" × 9" and are reddish-brown leather with parchment from the original edition pasted to the inside. There are 326 paper, 46-line pages with corner decorations on each page.

Contents: This collection of essays was originally written by Rottcher Baggett, a famous sage and scholar from Willip in the Kingdom of Furyondy, and was commissioned by Bretius Pohem, then-high priest of Boccob in the free city of Greyhawk. (This information is gleaned from Marc Draken's lengthy prologue.) The essays are divided into the following subjects: mathematics, alchemy, philosophy, planetology, and scientific speculation. On the subject of mathematics, Baggett wrote of the origin of the modern number system and how it hails from Tusmit. On the subject of alchemy, he theorized on magnetism, artificial gold, and the possibility of smoke powder, as well as explaining why greek fire burns so hot. According to Baggett's philosophy of education, facts should be tested before they are accepted. The planetology section offers already commonly accepted proofs that Oerth is the center of the universe. Lastly, Baggett speculated on how technology could be developed to do many things instead of using magic. He made several predictions which have not yet come true, such as the invention of telescopes, microscopes, gliders, and propeller-driven boats. He also speculated that there are other continents on Oerth besides the Flanaess, a theory that has only recently begun to find acceptance.

Game Mechanics: A character with an Intelligence of at least 15 could use this book as a manual for making greek fire. The equipment and ingredients would cost 100–200 gp and would make 5–8 vials' worth. The process should take weeks, prohibiting PCs from restocking during adventures. A DM could allow a character with an 18 Intelligence to use this book as a manual for inventing the compass, telescope, or glider. This research should cost 100–1,000 gp and take at least several months to accomplish, if it is allowed at all.

Colloquium Suloise

By Agnel Grammatol in 80 CY

Copied by Portun of Cernus Abbey, Veluna, in 457 CY

Suggested Price: 310 gp

Physical Description: The brown leather covers to this tome measure 9" × 11". The spine was lost long ago and replaced with wood. The glyph for "writing" is carved into the spine. There are 255 vellum, 40-line pages with top and bottom borders depicting heraldic shield devices.

Contents: A Common/Suloise primer written as a story between teacher and student.

Game Mechanics: When this text is compared with writing in the Suloise language, the reader may make a read/write ancient language (Suloise) check as if possessing that skill, though at a –2 penalty. The translation process is also laborious, and should take roughly one hour per page translated. The proficiency is not actually gained, and cannot be tried without the book.

Curabilis Pastorem

By Gregorius the Green in 610 OR

Copied by Duke Alvred Westbrook of Willip, Furyondy, in 454 OR

Suggested Price: 330 gp

Physical Description: The thick, brown, leather covers of this book measure 7" × 10", and the title is inscribed on the front cover in gold leaf. There are 274 paper, 41-line pages with thin, ornamental borders, red initials, and 35 woodcut plates in the center depicting various herbs.

Contents: There is a preface by the Duke, in which he scolds the clergy for relying on magic to heal what could be done with herbs. The rest of the text is partly a biography of Gregorius, a half-elf druid who wandered the Gnarley Forest when the free city of Greyhawk was just a town. Mostly, it is an exceptional textbook on herbalism.

Game Mechanics: Anyone already possessing the herbalism non-weapon proficiency receives a permanent +3 bonus to herbalism proficiency checks after studying the book for one month (without adventuring). Anyone without the herbalism proficiency may attempt a proficiency check at half his or her Wisdom score (rounded up). In the latter case, the book must be consulted each time. Also, anyone already possessing the etiquette proficiency gains a +1 bonus to reaction rolls when dealing with druids, who would be impressed by knowledge of the revered Gregorius.

(Language Note: The copy is written in Old Oerdian, just as the original was.)

Siman and Elimar

By anonymous author, circa 240 CY
Copied by Jurnsen Frelk, freescribe of Trigol, County of Urnst, in 460 CY

Suggested Price: 110 gp

Physical Description: This thin volume contains 98 parchment pages between two parchment covers. The front cover measures 8" × 11" and bears a woodcut print of a man fighting a lion. The pages have 38 lines and hand-painted illustrations of poor quality.

Contents: This is a morality play. Frelk's introduction suggests the tale was at least two hundred years old when he copied it, but it undoubtedly dates back to an older, oral legend. It is the story of twin brothers parted when their parents were killed. One of the twins, Siman, grows up in a family with a horrible stepsister who eventually has Siman arrested on false charges. Elimar, now a soldier, learns that his brother has been sentenced to a trial by combat, and Elimar vows to take his brother's place in the arena. Then, a deva appears and warns Elimar not to do so, or be cursed with leprosy. Elimar fights in the arena anyway, defeating a lion with nothing but a sword. Siman, once freed, seeks out a priest able to remove the curse of leprosy from his brother. Instead, he encounters the deva. It offers to remove the curse in exchange for Siman's life, to which Siman agrees. However, as a reward for both of their bravery, the curse is removed and Siman's life is spared.

Game Mechanics: Trial by combat is no longer practiced except in the least civilized places in the Flanaess. Among the Rovers of the Barrens, invoking the names Siman and Elimar still earns one the right to a trial by combat. Also, gullible PCs could be convinced the book hides some conjuration spells. (It doesn't.)

The Skkelf Ala Saga

By anonymous author, circa 50 CY
Copied by Karasten Meldraith, sage of White Fanged Bay, in 542 CY

Suggested Price: 160 gp

Physical Description: Only 76 vellum pages lie between these black leather covers held closed by two clasps. The covers are 10" × 12" and the front cover is embossed with the image of a man with a spear fighting an ogre. The pages have 46 lines and have elaborate, painted border decorations depicting weapons and armor, and red initials in gold fields.

Contents: This work records an ancient oral tradition from the Land of the Ice Barbarians. Skkelf Ala is a lost prince raised by a poor couple who are under a curse—they remember nothing of their lives before finding Skkelf. The troll shaman, Bontal, is manipulating events and places a second curse on Skkelf so that he must marry Bontal's sister, Tonn, or else turn into a wolf. On his way to comply with the wedding, Skkelf rescues a princess, Gornora, from an evil earl. The rescue takes too long, and Skkelf becomes a wolf. Gornora goes to Bontal to have him remove the curse, which he agrees to do if Gornora will marry him. But just then, Skkelf arrives—still in wolf form—and kills Bontal. Bontal's death lifts the curse, and Skkelf and Gornora marry and live happily ever after.

Game Mechanics: Ice Barbarians would be impressed by foreigners knowing this tale, perhaps enough to gain a +1 bonus to encounter reaction rolls. Also, Karasten Meldraith, the copier, is still active in the bay area and is now a powerful mage (see module WGS2, *Howl from the North*). Flattery of his writing skills could win his aid, should PCs be in the area and need help. Lastly, there is a valuable lesson in never polymorphing your enemies into something that can still harm you.

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Ker, N. R. *Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries, Vol. 2.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977.

Simpson, J. A. and E. S. C. Weiner. *The Oxford English Dictionary.* 2nd ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989.

Strayer, Joseph R., ed. *Dictionary of the Middle Ages, Vols. 1–4.* New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1982–1984.

Scott is a government documents librarian, something he has pursued for much less time than being published by TSR. The GREYHAWK setting has been his passion for the last eight years, making him a relative "novice" to the venerable campaign setting.

Working class Wizards

Don't Quit Your Day Job

When they are not adventuring or saving the kingdom, characters need other reasons for their existence and other diversions to occupy their time. Playing a PC who sits in a tavern and waits for a prospective employer to approach might make it easy for the DM, but it stops making sense after a short time. PCs simply have other things to do.

by Lloyd Brown III

illustrated by Jeremy Jarvis

Eventually, well–played characters want to pursue the career that tends to go with their class. Priests should build temples and spread their beliefs. Warriors should build fortresses or strongholds and raise armies against humanoids and other enemies. Thieves join guilds and take steps to control the criminal elements of their chosen city. Wizards are expected to lock themselves in seclusion in a remote tower and research spells. How boring.

While spell research may be good for gaining experience points and might give your PC a few handy spells, it isn't always possible (for financial reasons) or realistic (for time reasons), and often it isn't nearly as productive as capturing a spellbook and possibly finding a dozen or two new spells at once. At some point, out of necessity or good roleplaying, the wizard PC may wish to find a "normal" job, using his magic to aid his performance.

Here are a few suggestions for PC wizards who seek a way to apply their skills to earning money, gaining experience, meeting interesting people, and encountering challenging situations. Exactly how much attention is given to the pursuit of the career is up to the individual, but players of wizardly entrepreneurs should be aware that adventures can spring up at any time, and a full roster of *comprehend languages* and *magic mouth* spells won't go very far toward self-defense.

Cartographer

Player characters tend to accumulate maps as they adventure, so this profession is a natural one. The would-be cartographer wizard should acquire the cartography proficiency to be able to draw legible maps. Reading/writing is also a must to be able to include legends and text with the map. The caster should find a good source of paper, scrolls, scroll cases, and canvas if he makes wall maps.

For mapping nearby geography, the wizard can use *fly* or *levitate* to gain altitude and look around. Divinations like *clairvoyance* and *magic mirror* allow a wizard to see inside buildings, giving a detailed map over a period of time without ever leaving home.

For maps of distant locations, the wizard might wish to travel there using any number of spells (*teleport without error* is the most desirable). Or, if he has access to conjurations that summon a specific monster, he may attempt to conjure a creature from the distant area and interrogate it. More powerful, but risky divinations, such as *contact outer plane* or *vision* might reveal valuable information about remote places. These spells could be costly to the wizard, so they should be attempted only if the information is absolutely necessary.

Cartographers sell their finished maps for 10–100 gp each, depending on the age, size, quality of materials used, and complexity of notes. A cartographer wizard is sometimes contacted by a thief or spy who wishes a detailed map of a heavily guarded location. The thief might offer a cut of the loot, but a flat fee is often a better deal for the wizard—between 100 and 500 gp. If contracted to explore a new region (such as a new island or continent), cartographers can demand 200–500 gp per month, reasoning that their time required is brief, their methods are reliable, and their expenses high.

Cartographers usually stumble across adventures when they must personally investigate an area for mapping. This

necessity is often the case when the site they wish to map is shielded from magical scrying, out of their range, or the cartographer simply has no reference point from which to start (a necessity for a *clairvoyance*). For this reason, they should never go on such sojourns alone.

Cartography

1 slot; Wizard/Priest/Rogue
Intelligence, –2 modifier
Characters with the cartography proficiency are skilled at making maps. They can make maps to scale and can represent complex land formations through the use of perspective drawing and coastal outlines.

A successful proficiency roll indicates that the map is correct in every detail. A failed roll indicates that some details, possibly some significant ones, are in error. A roll of exactly 20 indicates that the map contains a serious error that invalidates it. The success roll for this proficiency should be made by the DM and kept secret from the player until the errors, if any, are discovered.

Engineer

The *Castle Guide* gives rules for dealing with spellcasters as part of a construction crew for large-scale buildings, but the DM and player might wish to work out smaller structures individually. Additional ideas can be found in the "Mage Construction" article in *DRAGON® Magazine* issue #242. Wizards who desire to work in this field should have the engineering proficiency if they don't want their buildings to fall apart when the magic fades.

The wizard can put up walls and floors directly with *wall of stone, wall of iron, transmute mud to rock,* and *move earth. Fabricate* can be used to turn the nearby trees into interior wooden walls. *Stone shape* works in a similar way. *Claws of the umber hulk* and *disintegrate* can make underground work a snap. *Illusionary wall* can make some of the inside work easier or be used to create a special effect for nobles who want a breezy dining area with privacy.

Engineers who work with mundane crews or who don't have the engineering proficiency may wish to add their abilities to those doing the actual work. Spells such as *enlarge, strength,* or *fly* can be cast on the crew or their tools to make their work easier. Conjured, summoned, or animated servants can provide assistance. Magical light sources may allow three full shifts to work on a project. Water-affecting spells such as *lower water* or *part water* can permit bridges, dams, or certain underground work where normal methods fail.

Engineers can work on contract, asking a certain percentage (10–50%) in advance and the balance on completion. Once they accumulate some capital, they might build on land they buy, hoping to find a seller later. This method generally brings in more cash but is riskier. If the property doesn't sell, the builder has wasted time and money. Architects are generally paid 200 gp per month, according to Chapter 12 of the *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide.* Wizard architects are paid at least double, and might receive bonuses for quick production. High level wizards who are capable of creating an entire small keep in a single busy day of spellcasting can demand double the amount for the entire project, especially if he reminds the owner of a wizard's ability to undo constructions, as well.

The builder considers excitement to be an obstacle to his construction. Monsters might attack workers, an enemy might not wish the building to be finished (especially a temple or fortification), or undead might not wish their resting spot to be disturbed. A wise engineer does not allocate all of his spells to construction.

Ward Wizard

The wizard may wish to offer his services protecting the property of other citizens. Characters often have creative ideas for protecting their own property; it is a simple matter to share some of these with others. In addition to giving general advice on safe habits (locking doors, keeping valuables in a safe), the wizard can give suggestions for magical wards and protections.

A *continual light* spell, for example, outside of the dwelling or in certain hallways can make a guard's job easier. The wizard can use *magic mouths* on exterior entrances to deter common trespassers and alert those inside, *wizard locks* on the doors to keep out earnest burglars, and *wizard marks* on valuable property so that it can be identified if it is somehow stolen. Deadly or dangerous wards such as *fire traps, sepia snake sigils,* and *explosive runes* may be a death sentence for thieves who ignore the warning signs. As a premium protection, a wizard might inscribe a *symbol* to kill or incapacitate the master thief who sneaks past the lesser protections.

Valuables hidden by illusion are harder to find and therefore harder to steal. This deception does not work with everyday goods that a person would display around the house, but it is a fine ploy for protecting cash, a family heirloom, or an item in a temporary hiding place.

While being a hunter might not pay well, the wizard hunter could demand a much greater fee.

Ward wizards generally ask a "consultancy fee" set according to the finances of the customer before they offer their suggestions as to where spells are needed and which spells are most effective. The fee might be as little as 10 gp for a freeman or up to 500 gp for a powerful noble. Certain common spells are also cast for a modest fee, only 100–300 gp. The dangerous protective spells cost several hundred to 1,000 gp or more each.

Although the ward wizard sees little opportunity for adventure in the primary application of this job, he might be contacted by somebody who needs to gain entry into a house likewise protected. The wizard might want to bring along companions with certain skills to help him identify and overcome some of the magical and nonmagical defenses.

Hunter

Player character wizards can find books of spells that can bring down a monster, but for bringing down game a different approach is needed. Ideally, the caster should find the game animal in question, with *locate creature*, if that spell is available. *Clairaudience, infravision,* or *magic mirror* might be able to find it otherwise. The wizard might then need to sneak within spell range, possibly using *invisibility* or *polymorph self,* and then bring it down before it can run.

Once in range, the wizard can cut loose with the attack spells. *Magic missile* and *flame arrow* both automatically hit their targets, have excellent range, and at higher levels cause enough damage to bring down an animal the size of a horse or bull. *Hold monster, color spray,* or *sleep* can render game helpless against the wizard's dagger. Area effect spells are especially effective against numerous small creatures like birds or fish. (*Sleep* brings down a small flock of birds; an underwater *lightning bolt* can fry up a school of fish.)

While being a hunter might not pay well (10 gp per month, according to Chapter 12 of the *DMG*), the wizard hunter could demand a much greater fee, depending on the game. If a finicky duke wants peryton instead of deer on his table, the hunter could charge ten times as much. Serving as a hunter can provide a wizard with the opportunity to spend generous amounts of time out in the wilderness with spells that can serve him well in a pinch. The hunter might stumble onto a solo adventure or an NPC he can introduce to the rest of the party.

Constable

The duties of the constable are diverse and require a flexible arsenal of spells. For the detection or identification of criminals, a large number of divinations have their uses. Once found, the criminal must still be caught. *Charm* spells are best for capture, but many spells can also be effective, including *hold person, Maximillian's earthen* or *stony grasp, slow,* or *levitate.*

Any wizard who expects violence should take self-preservation into consideration. For self-defense, the standard array of protective spells is adequate for most purposes. Likewise, the wizard cannot ignore the protection and well-being of his comrades. Protective spells, such as *armor, protection from evil,* or *invisibility,* that can be centered on another allow the wizard to share these benefits with other constables on his patrol.

For special purposes, the wizard might wish to memorize specific spells. *Hypnotic pattern, emotion,* or any of the nonlethal *fog* spells are useful for crowd control. *Dispel magic* is useful for dealing with other mages. *Knock* might be useful when a raid is planned on a criminal strong point.

Constables, considering their dangerous work, are not paid well—about 6–10 gp per month. The ability of a wizard to outperform his mundane companions guarantees him a greater pay. The wizard can be paid up to 150 gp per month if he has more than one or two spells to use daily. This amount can be increased with level increases and promotions.

Adventure hooks are easy for the constable wizard. He can be ordered to check out partial information by his superior, happen upon an adventure while on patrol, or overhear a vile plot against a good temple or institution from a source on the street. Acts of revenge by escaped convicts, free prisoners, or next of kin make things exciting, too.

Rescuer

Historically, the concept of a separate fire unit as a public body is a recent one. Fires were usually fought by the entire community acting together, but a single wizard, or a wizard and a small group of dedicated and trained individuals, can do much to lessen the devastation of a fire.

For the actual fighting of fires, *affect normal fires* is used almost exclusively. Its ability to reduce or eliminate flame makes it the premier spell of the fire-fighter. For larger fires, *gust of wind* may be used to halt or slow a quickly moving fire, *dig* can be used to make a fire break to stop a forest fire advancing toward town, and some of the large-area ice spells might be used to combat the heat and flame. If magic is suspected as the source of the fire, *dispel magic* may be useful in

stopping further growth. The firefighter may make use of *fire shield* to protect himself so that he can rescue persons trapped in a burning building.

Taking priority over saving property, however, is the saving of lives. For the rescue of other people, the wizard may be able to use *feather fall* to save a person trapped above the first level. *Feign death* might save someone suffering from smoke inhalation. *Wraithform* can allow the wizard to reach people trapped or cut off by other means (although some other means must then be used to bring them out).

By nature, the rescuer is often a humanitarian who seeks no great monetary compensation. The city may realize the importance of the work of a single wizard, however, and pay him a modest fee—30 gp to 180 gp per month, depending on how frequently his services are called upon. Those whom he helps often shower him with minor gifts, as well.

Stopping the spread of a fire can be quite a challenge for PCs. In addition to fighting fires, they might be called upon to help deal with a natural disaster: storm, flood, earthquake, or mudslide. Although such adventures usually involve a force of nature rather than evil monsters, they can be just as challenging and just as deadly.

Messenger

Most messages or small packages can be delivered by a youth on foot or horseback. Vital messages or unique packages might need a greater degree of security or speed. A wizard can often travel to places quicker than a person on foot or even mounted. Within a city, the major obstacles are not distance, but the press of crowds and the placement of buildings. A wizard with locomotion-oriented spells (*dimension door, fly, levitate, jump*) can overcome these obstacles quickly. The wizard can also summon a mount, either the first-level spell of that name or, better yet, a *phantom steed*, which has an excellent duration, great speed, and drives normal animals out of the way with its spectral presence.

The message itself may be placed via a *magic mouth*, encoded by magic or protected with magic. One simple deceit is to write a cryptic message on a scroll that is similar to the subject matter expected but different in content. The real message is the *magic mouth* on the scroll case, set to activate when a prearranged password is spoken.

Items that need to be carried might be placed within a *deep-pockets* robe, a miscellaneous magic item that the wizard owns, be sent by an *invisible stalker*, or sent directly with a *vanish* spell.

Payment is usually a weekly consideration for the nonmagical version of this job, but since the wizard's methods vary according to the priority of the message or package and the distance involved, the wizard usually collects in advance on each individual job. Wizards charge much more than a young man who carries messages by foot or by horse. Prices depend on the importance of the message, the distance involved, the priority of the message, and the secrecy needed. Fees can range from 10–25 gp for a simple job across town, to 1,000 gp or a minor magical item for a complicated delivery involving great distances.

This career often leads to adventures involving the contents of the package, enemies who might not wish to see it delivered, or obstacles encountered en route. Military messages, especially, are subject to interdiction. Sometimes, if the wizard is trusted with a message, he might hear about the actions of enemies or allies, and this information can give the wizard a clue that something is amiss and needs further investigation.

Spy

The primary objective of a spy is well known: gathering information. Divinations and charms that extract information fill the various books on spells. *ESP, charm person, locate object,* and other common spells can make the wizard a superlative spy. The secondary, and often more difficult, objective is to return the information back to the decision makers so that it can be put to use. For this purpose, the caster might wish to use some of the messenger's tactics, but with greater emphasis on encryption.

Other priorities of the spy come to mind as well. Disguise can be accomplished by nonmagical means, but if a person is surprised and has no time for makeup and wigs, a *change self* or other illusions work just as well. For that matter, many alterations allow the caster to appear as something different. Alterations are better in some ways, actually, because they cannot be disbelieved and may offer other benefits as well (compare *alter self* with *change self*).

The spy also thinks about personal defense in case he is caught. Combat is discouraged by the spy's superiors, who generally prefer that he escape alive and bring back his undelivered information personally. Since it is often easier to kill someone and then interrogate him with the *speak with dead* spell, the spy risks too much by fighting. From the spy's master's point of view, once the spy is discovered, his worth there is ended. He is best placed somewhere else.

Sailor PCs rarely need to look for excitement. Adventures just seem to happen to people on board a ship.

Since regular delivery of monies to the spy may be dangerous to his cover, his fees are sometimes paid as a lump sum when the mission is complete. The spy's fee depends on the level of security that he is asked to penetrate, the sensitivity of the information sought, time involved, and the enemy's expected response if he is caught. Spies are rarely cheap. Even a simple job costs 500 gp. Infiltrating the highest levels of government or the upper level of a priest hierarchy might cost as much as raising a small army. Ten thousand gold pieces might barely cover the spy's expenses for a dangerous mission after paying bribes, arranging for travel, buying special equipment, and throwing wealth around like a decadent noble.

Adventures can take the spy anywhere, for virtually any reason. Characters might wish to go on their own missions against their enemies. Many published adventures call for scouting or spying missions, and these can be easily adapted. Instead of employing a stereotypical sage too old to go there himself (ho-hum), a spy is called in to investigate personally, using his special skills.

Healer

The wizard is not capable of healing, but he might be called on when priests are few or absent, or when the local priest does not have access to healing spells. Besides possible proficiencies, the wizard's main strength is in removing magical afflictions like curses or harmful spells. Casting *dispel magic* is the main application of the wizard healer. If needed, he can cast a *feign death* on someone and thus stay their condition until a priest is found. Very high-level casters can use *limited wish* and *wish*, but these spells are costly to the caster and are reserved for royalty or powerful individuals (who should have a priest to heal them anyway).

Wizard healers might be part of a hospital, or they might work alone. They earn a moderate fee (50–100 gp per week) if they have the appropriate proficiencies, a bit more if they can actually use their spells to help people, and quite a bit more if they have custom spells to aid the sick (250–500 gp per casting). Low level wizards who lack the healing or herbalism proficiency are relatively useless in this capacity. Good necromancers, however, are often drawn to this career, and make the best non-priestly healers.

Healers encounter sick or wounded people as part of their job. These people might have been attacked by a monster that needs to be slain, a villain who has escaped from prison, or a personal nemesis of the PC. The sick person's cure might require a special herb that the healer and his companions need to locate. The city's enemies might attack the healers in the city prior to a major attack, possibly leaving behind a clue to their location and intentions. The healer might also be asked to accompany others on a mission where heavy casualties are expected. Any free help the healer might bring with him is welcome, of course.

Sailor

Wizards have invaluable skills to aid shipbound sailors. When at sea, they often serve as firefighters, staving off dreaded fire attacks against their ship and commanding search-and-rescue missions for sailors lost at sea. For fighting off pirates, a standard mage is well-equipped, but the PC should consider whether the goal is to destroy or capture the enemy ship. Fire and lightning are ideal for the former, cloud-based spells (*cloudkill, stinking cloud*), cold (*ice storm, cone of cold*), or enchantments (*sleep* and *hold person*) for the latter. Players who wish to pursue a career as a sailor should read Ted Zuvich's thought-provoking article on shipmages in *DRAGON Magazine* #235 for a very thorough description of custom spells and useful applications.

The wizard is often paid a set fee for his services, running about 100 gp per month or more, depending on level, in addition to a percentage of the ship's earnings, whether from trade or piracy. Custom spells or creative casting can enhance this amount. The wizard can charge the ship's owner for spells that permanently enhance the seaworthiness or cargo capacity of the ship.

Sailor PCs rarely need to look for excitement. Adventures just seem to happen to people on board a ship. Sea monsters, wrecks, undead ships, islands, pirates, bad weather, and other encounters can keep PCs busy for a long time. (Odysseus's ten years at sea were anything but dull.)

Merchant

Wandering wizard merchants seem by nature to be given to dishonesty. Illusions and enchantments can be used to sell people useless items or ordinary items at highly inflated prices. *Nystul's magic aura* makes an item appear magical, multiplying its value by a hundred or more. *Charm person* or *suggestion* can make a person buy something he doesn't need. The possibility exists that any item sold by a wizard has been created or conjured and could disappear after a short time.

Merchants who have a permanent base of operations would be unwise to use such tactics. Their friends and neighbors would show their "appreciation" in an immediate and probably violent way. These stay-at-home merchants use their spells to clean up, repair, or make common items. A simple *ESP* can protect the wizard from fraud. They may use alterations or illusions to make some highly-visible signs, light their stores, or provide atmosphere. *Unseen servants* can pamper wealthy customers by taking their hat and cloak, opening doors for them, or presenting the merchant's goods.

Merchant wizards may purchase items that bring them adventures, depending on the nature of their wares. Items may be stolen or bear concealed magics. Customers might search for stolen items, seek to deceive the merchant mage, or wish to purchase a rare item, necessitating a brief excursion by the merchant wizard. Greedy thieves test the alertness of the wizard, and jealous rivals may resort to illegal methods of competition.

Other Careers

Undoubtedly wizards can excel at more jobs than can be described in one article. The key is for a player to discover how to apply his unique spell selection so that he is capable of performing the duties necessary and for the DM to find a way to make interesting things happen in the course of the job. Adventures that could work with nearly any profession include hostile competitors resorting to strongarm tactics, a thieves' guild running a protection scam, a fugitive from the law requesting the PC's services, and more. The only limit is the DM's imagination.

Lloyd has had a few jobs in the real world, but none of them is as interesting as any of these. Of course, he earns real money, not imaginary gold pieces, so it evens out in the long run.

More Guidelines for the World Builder

With a Twist

by James Wyatt ◆ illustrated by Larry Elmore & Robh Ruppel

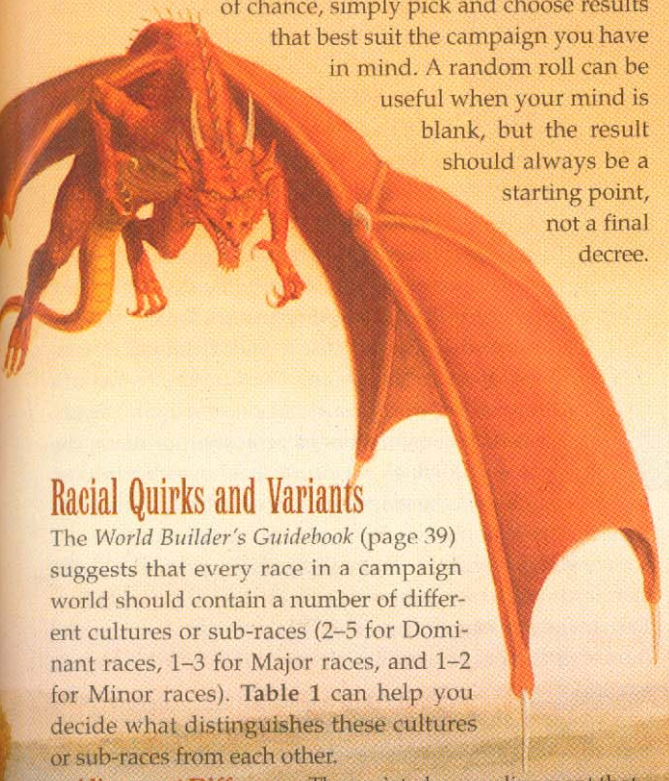
The *World Builder's Guidebook* contains extensive tables for generating the characteristics of human, demihuman, humanoid, and other populations in a campaign area. Here are two more tables that can help round out these societies by defining unusual quirks for separate cultures or subraces, and by determining the relationships between different races and cultures in your campaign. Even without the *World Builder's Guidebook*, these tables can spark your imagination as you create new cultures or take a new look at existing ones in your own campaign.

For example, say you've already determined that a certain region of your campaign world is populated by three human nations, a group of elves in the woods, and some gnomes who serve as traders throughout the region. **Table 1: Racial Quirks and Variants** can help you decide what makes the human nations distinct from each other. Perhaps one was formed by a group of religious dissenters from another nation (a roll of 11—religious difference), while another is known for its great academy of the

mental arts (a roll of 10—psionics). If elves are starting to feel a bit routine in your game, another look at **Table 1** can help you decide that these elves use preserving magic, from the DARK SUN® campaign, which distinguishes them from human spellcasters in your campaign (a roll of 2—Different Form/Method of Magic).

Next, a look at **Table 2: Relationship to Dominant Race** can help you determine how all these races interact with each other. Choose one race or culture—say one of the human nations—as the dominant race in the region. A few rolls (or selections) on **Table 2** tell you that one other human group is simply a province in a larger human empire (a roll of 6—Province), while the other one is a somewhat more independent client state (3—Client State). For the elves, an interesting result appears: a roll of 9—Slavery. A picture begins to emerge of an expansionistic human empire that absorbs other human nations—they first become client states, then provinces—while enslaving the elves who resisted this expansion. The gnomes, on the other hand, have been completely assimilated (1—Assimilation) and no longer possess a separate nation, culture, or language.

As in the *World Builder's Guidebook*, these tables include numbers for random generation. If you prefer to design your world deliberately rather than surrender to the whims of chance, simply pick and choose results that best suit the campaign you have in mind. A random roll can be useful when your mind is blank, but the result should always be a starting point, not a final decree.



Racial Quirks and Variants

The *World Builder's Guidebook* (page 39) suggests that every race in a campaign world should contain a number of different cultures or sub-races (2–5 for Dominant races, 1–3 for Major races, and 1–2 for Minor races). **Table 1** can help you decide what distinguishes these cultures or sub-races from each other.

Alignment Difference. The society has an alignment that is uncharacteristic for that race. Good orcs or lawful elves are basic examples.

Different Form/Method of Magic. Spellcasters in this society cast spells in a different way than usual for the campaign. They might use a variant spell-point system described in the *PLAYER'S OPTION®: Spells & Magic* book; have a kit from *The Complete Sha'ir's Handbook*; or practice spellsinging, runecasting, or some other magic variant.

Enslaved and Altered by Monster. Some evil, alien monster has enslaved the members of this society and altered them in some way. The monster could be a dragon, aboleth, yuan-ti, githyanki, mind flayer, beholder, or similar creature. The race's servitude has given them unique characteristics. The enslaved race might resemble the draconians from the DRAGONLANCE® saga or be resistant to psionics like the shattered brethren of Bluetspur in the RAVENLOFT® setting. Perhaps their yuan-ti masters have given them a poisonous bite. The abilities the race possesses should reflect the nature of their masters and should be accompanied by significant drawbacks (in addition to the simple fact of slavery).

Exotic Habitat. The society dwells in a magical habitat, such as a cloud city, a planar vortex, or an adjacent dimension. Or they could have cities floating on the ocean or deep underwater.

Historical Schism. A significant historical event splintered this group off from other members of the same race. This could lead to differences as dramatic as the distinction between githyanki and githzerai, or as subtle as hill dwarves and sundered dwarves.

Plane-touched, Elemental Planes. For whatever reason—geographical proximity to an elemental vortex or a history of dealings with genies, for example—the society shows an influence from the elemental planes. This influence could be purely cultural, such as a preponderance of elemental mages or sha'irs, or the race itself might have attributes and abilities characteristic of creatures from the elemental planes. Such abilities might include:

- +2 bonus to save vs. fire-, air-, water-, or earth-based attacks; or a +1 bonus per five levels;
- magical abilities such as *levitate* (air), *pass without trace* (earth), *affect normal fires* (fire), or *create water* (water)—like the genasi of the PLANESCAPE® setting; or
- the power, like that possessed by yak-men, to control a specific kind of geneis or elementals.

Races that possess magical abilities like these might also have physical characteristics reminiscent of their affiliated element—red hair, stony skin, or gills. For a more unusual twist, consider a paraelemental or quasi-elemental plane instead of one of the four main elements.

Plane-Touched, Lower Outer Planes. Unfortunately, the elemental planes are not the only ones that break into and influence a campaign world. This culture carries the scars of contact with the lower outer planes, the home of absolute evil. This contact could be limited to certain unfortunate individuals within the society (who might use the alienist or witch forms of magic described in *Player's Option: Spells & Magic*), or it could be a blight permeating the entire culture. Perhaps a powerful baatezu summoned to this region years ago has taken control of the throne (openly or, more likely, in secret), or an entire infestation of tanar'ri has broken through to this plane. A good source of inspiration is the old AD&D® adventure *Q1, Queen of the Demonweb Pits*, which described several Prime Material worlds which had been subjected to Lolth's conquests. Cambion and alu-fiends could be present and influential, or tieflings (from the Planescape setting) could be widespread in the region. It is even possible that all members of the race could possess tiefling-like characteristics and abilities, such as:

- *darkness 15' radius, charm person, mirror image*, or *chill touch* once per day;
- *suggestion, vampiric touch*, or *summon swarm* once per week;
- +2 to saving throws vs. cold, fire, electricity, and/or poison;
- fangs, horns, tails, hooves, scales, feathers, or green skin;
- an ashy or sulfurous odor, no reflection, suseptibility to sunlight.

Members of any race that has been tainted by the lower outer planes have a definite evil bent.

Plane-Touched, Upper Outer Planes. Balancing those foul regions besmirched with the touch of the lower planes, some areas and cultures have been blessed with the special notice of the upper outer planes. Again, this influence can run the gamut from a subtle, localized influence (an aasimar king or high priest), to a theocracy ruled by an aasimon, to a pervasive atmosphere of benevolence. Some or all members of the race could possess abilities similar to those of aasimar or creatures from the upper planes, such as:

- +2 to saving throws vs. *charm, fear, emotion, or domination effects;*
- 10% magic resistance;
- *detect lie, detect evil*, or *light* once per day;
- half damage from heat or cold effects.

Members of these societies are mostly good in alignment.

Post-Civilized Society. This culture is past its prime and has fallen into either decadence or a complete reversion to barbarism. Examples might include the late Roman Empire or early Dark Ages, or a race of savage elves that is the sole remnant of an ancient elven empire. Technology levels are fairly low, but ruins from ancient times might hold marvelous reminders of the past golden age.

Table 1: Racial Quirks & Variants

d20	Result
1	Alignment Difference
2	Different Form/Method of Magic
3	Enslaved and Altered by Monster
4	Exotic Habitat
5	Historical Schism
6	Plane-Touched, Elemental Planes
7	Plane-Touched, Lower Outer Planes
8	Plane-Touched, Upper Outer Planes
9	Post-Civilized Society
10	Psionics
11	Religious Difference
12	Savage Society
13	Spelljamming
14	Unusual Ability Scores
15	Unusual Class Options
16	Unusual Habitat
17	Unusual Technology
18	Variant Coloration
19	Very Advanced Magic
20	Very Advanced Society

Psionics. The race possesses psionics where it usually does not, or the culture is known for cultivating and teaching the use of psionic powers. Individuals in this culture can buy wild psionic talent as a nonweapon proficiency or character trait (for a cost of 3 proficiency slots or 9 character points), or have double the normal chances of possessing wild talent. It is even possible that every member of the race possesses at least one talent (as in the Dark Sun campaign setting). Any member of the race can belong to the psionicist character class. They could be the only psionic race on the world (though psionic monsters should also exist to provide a special challenge).

Religious Difference. This culture's religion sets it apart from other cultures of the same race. The society might be devoted to forbidden gods, such as the Elder Elemental God or the Dark God (both described in *Monster Mythology*), an Abyssal lord, or something resembling H.P. Lovecraft's Cthulhu mythos. Or a society of high elves could be devoted to Lolth, for example. The members of this culture could also worship the gods of another race or culture, though there is usually a good historical reason for something like this happening (see **Table 2**). The culture might be a theocracy, ruled by a demigod or a devout priest of a fringe deity. A theocracy could also follow a more mainstream deity, but worship that god in a more rigid way than their counterparts in another culture. Finally, the society might have no gods at all, instead revering a force or philosophy, as described in *The Complete Priest's Handbook*. Examples of forces include Nature and the Life-Death-Rebirth cycle, while philosophies include Good and Evil. Experiment with creating new forces or philosophies using the existing ones as guidelines. A culture could even be devoted to a philosophy of atheism, which nevertheless provided its "priests" (philosophers) with spells and granted powers.

Savage Society. This culture is unusually primitive by the standards of its race, possessing Stone Age or possibly limited metalworking technology. They might be peaceful hunter-gatherers or warlike raiders, but they are certainly xenophobic. As always, consider playing with expectations: one would naturally expect a group of savage orcs to be brutally violent and cruel, but what if instead they are a very peaceful people? Primitive elves could be much like the grugach of the Greyhawk® campaign setting, and savage dwarves might look much like the Dragonlance saga's gully dwarves (but bear in mind that a savage race is not necessarily a stupid one) or the "wild dwarves" described in the *Monstrous Compendium® Annual, Volume 3*. Inspiration and resources for savage cultures can be found in such sources as *The Jungles of Chult* and the RPGA® Network's Living Jungle™ campaign.

Spelljamming. This culture has knowledge of spelljamming technologies. Either they possess the technology themselves and have members who actively ply the phlogiston, or they have extensive contact with members of spelljamming cultures from other worlds. Another possibility is a society descended from spelljammers who "beached" on this world but who no longer have the know-how or resources to create spelljamming vessels. The neogi who inhabit an island in Faerûn's Sea of Fallen Stars are an example of this. This result can be an excuse to change the race of the culture—an enclave of advanced lizard men, arcane, or scro, for example.

Unusual Ability Scores. For some reason, individuals in this culture have ability scores beyond the norm for their race. Examples include wood elves who are stronger than high elves and gully dwarves who are less intelligent than their cousins. Members of this society might be particularly skilled at trade and interaction with others, giving them unusually high Charisma, or they might labor under the curse of a deity who robbed them of intuition, common sense, and willpower. Creating a rationale for unusual ability scores can add great depth to a culture.

Unusual Class Options. Members of this culture can belong to a character class not normally allowed to their race. As an example, there might be an order of dwarven paladins with a specific role and function in this society, or a race of halflings who were blessed with the ability to become wizards when their ancestor did a favor for the goddess of magic. If the culture is human, they might possess unusual classes like handlers (usually open only to kender) or gladiators (from the DARK SUN campaign setting). Allow or disallow player characters from this culture, as you see fit.

Unusual Habitat. The members of this culture live in a habitat that is not characteristic for their race. Their habitat might be similar, such as northern forests for a race of taiga elves, or highly unusual—what about a race of mountain or desert elves? The race should possess minor special abilities that reflect this difference in habitat. Mountain elves, for example, might possess a few abilities from the list of options for dwarven characters in the *PLAYER'S OPTION: Skills & Powers* book, such as *meld into stone* or *close to the earth.*

Unusual Technology. This society's material culture is vastly different from the campaign norm. They might have unusual domesticated animals, forms of agriculture, or modes of transportation. They might be a magically powerful society, where the use of certain spells predated and made unnecessary certain technological innovations. For example, the use of *levitation* could have made the invention of the wheel unnecessary, and the culture might rely entirely on *levitation* for all forms of machinery and transportation. Domesticated animals could include giant or domesticated species, such as bulettes or giant weasels, while agriculture might be practiced in the ocean, in the rainforest canopy, or aided by *plant growth* spells.

Variant Coloration. The members of this society just look different from the racial norm. The color of their hair, skin, or eyes, or all three, might be different. In addition to coloration, texture or transparency might vary. Perhaps a group of dwarves have skin that is hard and rock-like, or hair that is actually fine strands of metal wire. The "ghouls" of Fritz Leiber's Nehwon are essentially normal humans with transparent flesh, so their bones show through.

Very Advanced Magic. This society has developed magic that surpasses the campaign or racial norm. This might include tenth-level spells, either the True Dweomers described in *DM OPTION: High-Level Campaigns,* or the psionic enchantments of the DARK SUN campaign setting. For demihuman races, this might mean that wizards exist in this culture, or that they can reach higher levels than usual, even unlimited levels. For humanoid races, this might indicate the presence of true priests rather than the usual shamans or witch doctors. Other options are certainly possible as well: magic might be more prevalent in this society, allowing everyone access to simple cantrips, and making wizards almost common. Alternatively, members of the race could possess innate spell-like abilities, duplicating spell effects up to third level or even higher. *High-Level Campaigns*, pages 47–51, is a good source of inspiration.

Very Advanced Society. This culture is civilized beyond the norm for its race or for the campaign as a whole. If the culture in question is a group of lizard men, then this result would indicate semi-civilized, metal-using lizard men like those of the SPELLJAMMER® campaign setting. For a human group, on the other hand, this result might indicate a culture that is experiencing a time of enlightenment and scientific inquiry like the European Renaissance. Such a culture might be the only place in the campaign world where items such as water clocks and primitive firearms are available. The culture should also have more advanced forms of government, trade, and society than the norm.

Relationship to Dominant Race

Table 2 expands the ideas presented on Table 22: Race Position in the *World Builder's Guidebook.* While that table offers suggestions for how the different races within a single kingdom might relate to each other (from completely intermixed to enslavement), this table begins with the assumption that each race is a separate culture and kingdom, and

explores the relationship between them. Naturally, certain results prove the exception to this assumption.

Assimilation. One race has been completely assimilated into the other. Its members share neighborhoods, customs, clothing, mannerisms, and language with the members of the dominant race. The assimilated race's cultural traditions are all but forgotten. Racial prejudice, if it exists at all, is minimal, since even members of the dominant race tend to see the assimilated ones as just like them.

Caste. One race forms a distinct group within the dominant culture, retaining its own language and traditions, its own neighborhoods, and a sense of its own identity. However, it fits in with the dominant culture and is recognized as a separate but more-or-less equal group within that culture. Just as there are certain social rules for dealing with priests or nobility, there are social rules for the interaction between the races. The distinct race essentially forms a closed social class within the dominant culture.

Client State. The two races form separate political entities, but the ruler of one has sworn allegiance to the ruler of the other. This relationship is similar to medieval oaths of fealty, as well as to the ancient Roman political method from which it gets its name. The patron state agrees to help protect the client state from invaders or internal rebellion, while the client swears loyalty, pays taxes, and supplies troops to the patron. The two cultures remain relatively distinct, but the upper classes in the client state tend to adopt the fashions of the upper crust of the patron state.

Ghetto. Members of one race are confined to certain city neighborhoods or outlying reservations within the territory of the other race. Very little interaction occurs between the two races, which at least allows the lesser race to maintain much of its culture and traditions, as well as a certain degree of autonomy. The ghetto is governed from within, though its members are subject to the laws of the nation in which they reside. They may leave the ghetto areas, at least temporarily, but usually are required to carry legal papers and must return to the ghetto by nightfall.

Integration. Members of both races are equal citizens of a single nation, while retaining their own customs, traditions, and even languages (though a common tongue makes trade and other interactions possible). Neither law nor common practice gives preference to either race.

Province. When a client state's relationship to the dominant state becomes unstable, it generally either breaks off into autonomy or is assimilated into an empire as a province. The inhabitants of the former client state often see no difference when this latter change occurs, as it is primarily a shift in rulership. A foreign governor replaces the former client ruler, but little else changes immediately. As in a client state, the upper echelons of the new province continue to emulate the fashions of the ruling people, and the dominant culture slowly seeps down to the general populace, with total assimilation the final result. However, the cultural exchange often works in both directions. Just as the Roman governors of Egypt were clothed with all the regalia of the pharaohs, so a human ruler of a dwarven kingdom might have a dwarven title, dress in dwarven fashion, and grow his beard long.

Semi-Autonomous Pocket. The members of one race form their own nation, but its territory is completely surrounded by the other races. Either the surrounding race does not recognize the autonomy of the pocket, in which case the pocket is a dissident or even rebellious group within the larger society, or the pocket split off from the dominant society through a treaty or other arrangement. In either case, it is likely that political tensions are high in the pocket and the surrounding area. The two cultures are distinct, though the surrounding culture's influence is strongly felt in the pocket region.

Separation. The two races form two completely separate nations, with one adjoining border. Relations can be friendly or not-so-friendly; the border could be disputed or agreed upon. The cultures remain completely distinct, though trade and other interactions might allow some cross-pollination of ideas and behaviors.

Slavery. The members of one race or culture have enslaved the other, probably as the result of war or colonization. Slavery has a profound and far-reaching influence on the culture of the enslaved: where that race's cultural traditions survive, they are usually practiced in secret since they are most likely prohibited by the enslaving culture, and they often undergo significant transformations under the influence of the dominant culture. It is possible, as in ancient Rome, for individual slaves to rise to positions of power and influence, but most slaves live in impoverished and dehumanizing conditions. The heroes in a campaign should always regard the institution of slavery as evil.

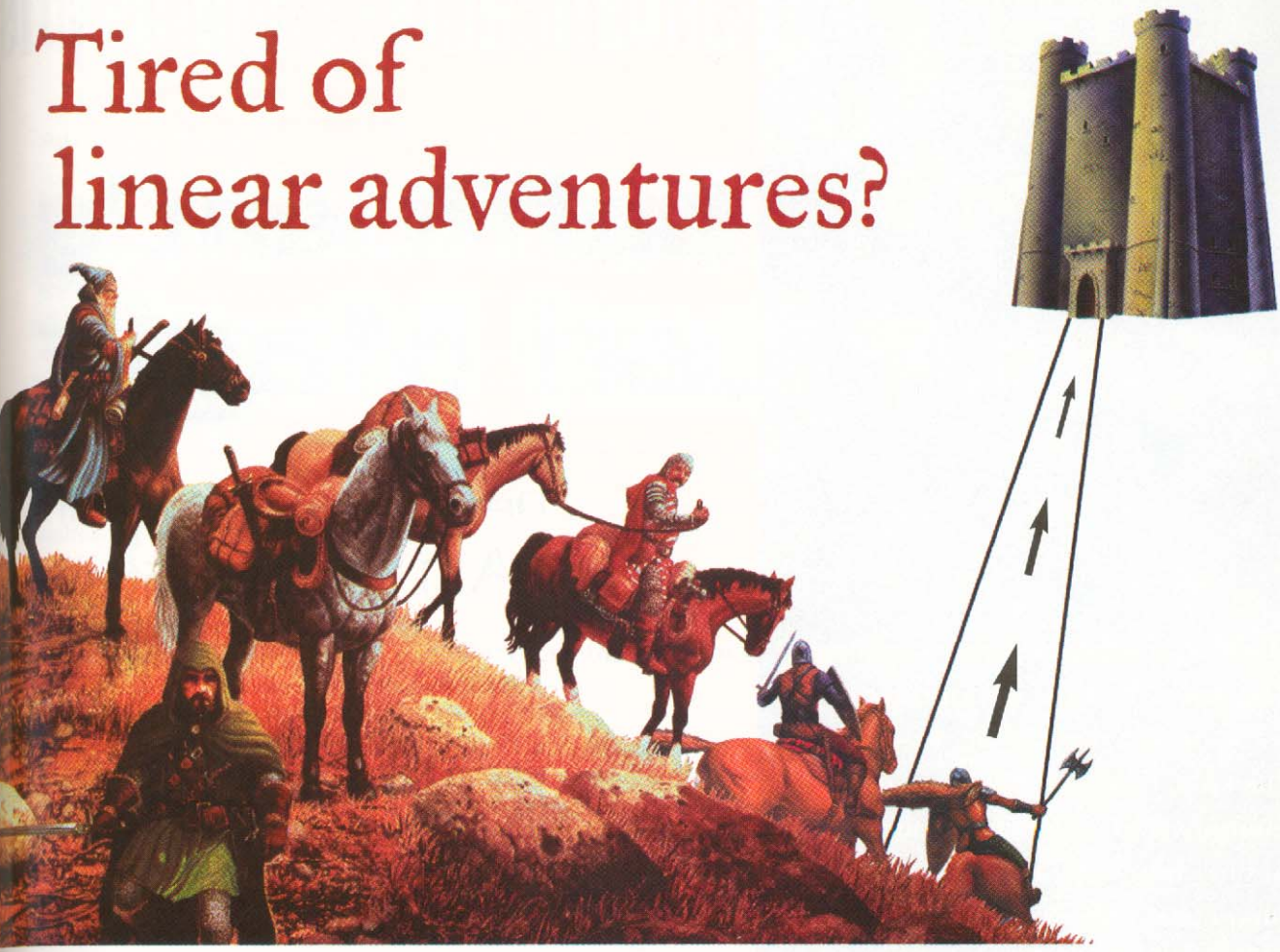
Underclass. The members of one race form a separate and very unequal social class in the dominant society. They might be freed slaves or the remnant of a conquered nation, and their status in the society remains second-class at best. The members of the underclass have little or no opportunity for advancement, and personal prejudice against them is deeply ingrained in the dominant society. Acts of violence or mob "justice" against members of the underclass are common. The dominant race views the native culture of the oppressed race with scorn, and to an extent they see themselves the same way, laboring under the belief, learned from their oppressors, that they are the inferior race.

Table 2: Relationship to Dominant Race

d10	Result
1	Assimilation
2	Caste
3	Client state
4	Ghetto
5	Integration
6	Province
7	Semi-Autonomous Pocket
8	Separation
9	Slavery
10	Underclass

At this year's Game Fair, James Wyatt didn't stalk the editors so much as lurk near them. He laughed the hardest at Dave's Bear Story at dinner, though, so we'll probably publish another of his articles soon.

Tired of linear adventures?



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"Any sufficiently advanced technology is

Sufficiently Advanced Magic

Dealing with Magic in the ALTERNITY® Game

by **Stephen Kenson**

Magic in a science-fiction setting? The idea is not as outlandish as it might sound at first. As Clarke's Law reminds us, many elements of science fiction can seem magical to an outside observer, especially one who is not acquainted with advanced technology. In addition, many science-fiction settings feature unusual mental powers or aliens with unique abilities that could be considered "magical" in the right light. Finally, some worlds actually blend SF and fantasy elements together, creating a fusion of science and sorcery. Here is a look at all these different options for injecting a little magic into your ALTERNITY® game adventures, particularly in the STAR*DRIVE™ campaign setting.

Sleight of Hand

Even in the most rational "hard science" science-fiction setting, the hand is still quicker than the eye. The age-old arts of prestidigitation and misdirection allow stage-magicians to perform amazing tricks with the right amount of preparation. Many people want to believe in magic in some way, so the arts of the stage illusionist can find an audience even in the technologically advanced worlds of the future.

This is hardly fantasy magic with fireballs and lightning bolts, but a skilled stage magician can still pull off some interesting stunts with a little forethought and preparation. A Free Agent hero might pick up the Manipulation skill with a specialization in *prestidigitation*, making small objects seem to vanish or appear out of thin air; or *lockpicking*, allowing the hero to escape from otherwise "impossible" traps. Such skills are often useful for impressing and charming the natives on different worlds, whether the hero uses them to produce a flower out of nowhere as a gift to a nobleman's lovely daughter or to escape from confinement when things have not quite gone as planned. Combined with Personality skills like Deception and Entertainment, the hero can do a good job of convincing some people that he really does have magical powers of some kind.

With the advanced technology available in an SF setting like the STAR*DRIVE campaign, "magic" is easier to perform than ever, although people are often harder to fool. With scanners, holographic projection, and gravity control, would-be magicians can pull off amazing feats. Combined with the skills of a true stage magician, such feats can appear "magical" even to fairly sophisticated people, at least until they find out how the trick is done. Then the "audience" is not likely to appreciate being fooled.

indistinguishable from magic." — Arthur C. Clarke

Adventure Hooks

▼ The heroes are traveling aboard a large starship or visiting a resort planet. They attend the performance of a legendary stage magician, renowned for his incredible feats of illusion. At the climax of the performance, the magician vanishes from the stage in a puff of smoke, only to reappear inside his magician's cabinet, dead, stabbed in the chest with a prop dagger. Unknown to anyone else, the magician has been assisting an underground railroad of sesheyans in escaping from VoidCorp. A VoidCorp assassin, lurking beneath the stage, stabbed the magician when he dropped through a hidden trapdoor, then pushed his body into the cabinet through the hidden door below. Can the heroes find the assassin before he or she manages to escape?

▼ Stories are circulating about a mysterious "ghost ship" that wanders the spaceways near a particular system. The story has been going on for years, but recently there have been actual sightings of the ghost ship—an ancient dilapidated hulk floating through space, with strange lights flickering inside. Also, several ships in the area have disappeared recently. The authorities blame the local asteroid field as a navigation hazard, but many of the spacers have heard that at least one of the missing ships managed to send out a distress call saying they had spotted the ghost ship heading right for them. Something is definitely going on, and it has everyone spooked.

The truth is that a group of space pirates are using advanced holographic projection to create the "ghost ship," using it as a distraction for their own raids. Ships vanish, and everyone blames the "ghost." The heroes may be asked to investigate by the local authorities or one of the vanished ships might belong to a friend of theirs. They can track the pirates back to their lair, hidden in the depths of a large asteroid, and recover the lost ships and their crews while exposing the deception.

▼ A human prophet has appeared on the weren homeworld, preaching heresies about the Orlamu faith and demonstrating miraculous powers that have impressed the weren. Officials of the Theocracy are obviously concerned with the possible contamination of the weren culture and with the possibility of a popular uprising of weren against them, but they have been unable to apprehend the prophet as yet. The heroes can attempt to infiltrate the prophet's cult and discover that he is using advanced technology, controlled by a subdermal NIJack implant, to produce his "miracles."

Sufficiently Advanced Technology

Even the advanced technology of the STAR*DRIVE setting can be overshadowed by more advanced alien technology. Several "precursor" races are mentioned as existing on worlds explored by humans, races that died out thousands or even millions of years ago. While most of their technology has turned to dust, some examples of it still exist. Such technology may be so advanced as to be beyond human comprehension, effectively magical. Generally these technologies are at Progress Level 9 or greater, although even a functional PL 8 artifact would be priceless to any of the stellar nations in the STAR*DRIVE galaxy.

Some possible "wonder technologies" are described here, but they are not the only ones. Some precursor technology may be so advanced that it simply cannot be described in terms of human science. Most of the tech here should be considered PL 9 or better. Exactly what such powerful artifacts are capable of is entirely up to the Gamemaster.

Drive-Tech

At PL 8 a stardrive can propel a ship through drivespace to its destination in only 11 hours, much faster than the PL 7 stardrives available in the STAR*DRIVE setting. Such a vessel could appear at its destination at the same time that early-warning systems first detect the resonance waves of its approach, allowing for lightning strikes and surprise tactics. Worlds relying on warnings from their drivespace detectors would be caught off guard. At PL 9 or higher, a drive might cross space almost instantaneously, providing a tremendous advantage. Any stellar nation would go to great lengths to possess such technology, so it is best for advanced stardrives—like most precursor technology—to be unique things that appear in an adventure briefly, then are destroyed to keep them out of the hands of those who might abuse them.

Psi-Tech

Some precursor technology may be based on or controlled by psionics. Even if the campaign setting doesn't normally allow psionic abilities, a piece of precursor tech might bring them out, at least temporarily. Psionically controlled technology might require the Telepathy skill of *contact* to use, or it might respond to sufficiently strong thoughts from anyone. Psionic-enhancing tech can increase the user's psionic energy points, psionic skill levels, duration, or all of the above! Of course, there is always the possibility that psi-tech carries some kind of psionic "imprint" from its original owners, a psychic "ghost" that might take control of anyone using the technology, providing the basis for an SF ghost story.

Nanotech

Nanotech consists of microscopic machines known as "nanites," capable of reorganizing matter on a very small scale. A swarm of nanites can transform raw materials into finished products based on pre-programmed blueprints, recycle waste materials with almost 100% efficiency, and transform matter in almost any way desired. A nanite plague, on the other hand, can quickly deplete a world of all life and even break down whole planets, given time. Invisible to the naked eye, the effects of nanotech would certainly appear to be magical to most observers, especially if

some kind of remote-control device existed for controlling the nanites, allowing an individual to apparently wield power over ordinary matter, transmuting and transforming it at will.

Matter-Energy Conversion

Modern science tells us that matter and energy are related. This technology utilizes that theory to transform matter into energy and vice versa. The possibilities for matter-energy conversion tech are almost endless, though again, this technology is available at PL 8 or higher. Among the simpler possibilities is teleportation (transformation of matter into energy, which is beamed to a distant location, then restored to matter). Using drivesats or similar relays, it would even be possible to beam things through drivespace, creating an interstellar transportation network. Matter can be converted into energy for fuel, releasing almost unlimited power; and energy can be converted into matter to materialize virtually any object out of "nothing." Used as a weapon, this technology can simply dematerialize targets, transforming them into pure energy.

Time Travel

Perhaps the pinnacle of any technology is the ability to master time. A precursor time machine might be a small device that is worn or carried, a vessel of some kind, or a free-standing gate that travelers simply step through. It might be controlled manually, verbally or psionically. It's up to the Gamemaster to decide how time travel works and what time travelers can do to alter the past. Information and ideas about time travel appear in the *ALTERNITY Gamemaster Guide.*

Adventure Hooks

▼ A rogue mindwalker discovers a world that holds a legendary precursor artifact known as the Mindcrown. The crown contains highly advanced psionic amplifiers that magnify the psionic abilities of anyone who wears it to near-godlike levels. Unfortunately, the crown also drives its wearer insane from the tremendous psionic input. Using the crown destroyed the civilization that created it and eventually drives its new wearer to madness. The heroes must come up with a way to overcome the tremendously augmented powers of the mindwalker, who may be using the crown to control and influence others around them.

▼ The heroes visit a world containing the ruins of a precursor civilization. Unknown to them, the precursors possessed incredibly advanced matter-energy conversion technology that responded to their thoughts, providing them with everything they desired. Unfortunately the thoughts of "primitives" like the heroes lack the mental discipline of the precursors. As the heroes explore the planet, they find their every whim starting to come true. Old friends, enemies, and loved ones materialize out of nowhere. Incredible treasures and desired objects appear, and the heroes' fondest dreams and darkest nightmares begin to come to life. To complicate matters, the converter is draining energy from the heroes' ship to help power its creations, making it difficult to leave the planet. The heroes must conquer their fears and find some way of shutting down the system (which self-destructs and never functions again, of course).

▼ The heroes discover a precursor time-gate and pass through, unaware of its true nature. The heroes' actions inadvertently change the past. The galaxy they return to is nothing like the one they recall, dominated by a hostile alien race. One interesting possibility in the STAR*DRIVE setting is to have the galaxy dominated by a normally primitive alien species like the weren or the sesheyans, who have developed advanced technology in this timeline. The heroes must go back through the time-gate to undo their mistake, while agents from the new timeline seek to stop them and preserve their own history.

Powers of the Mind

Mindwalkers and psionic talents exist in the STAR*DRIVE setting, allowing characters to perform feats of mind-reading, extra-sensory perception, psychokinesis, and even healing and shape-shifting. Psionic skills are similar in many ways to the powers of magicians. In fact, psionics might be the truth behind many such myths. To primitive humans in the millennia before psionics were understood, the abilities of a gifted few seemed like "magic."

Even in the enlightened age of the 26th century, mindwalkers have something of a magical mystique to them. The Orlamu use psionic skills combined with religious and military training. Hatire seers, mystics, healers, and mind knights use their abilities in the service of humanity and the Cosimir, their deity. Ancient techniques and rituals, once thought to be the province of sorcerers and shamans, are used to train novice mindwalkers. The line between psi, magic, and mysticism is often blurred.

In primitive cultures (human or alien), psionic skills are more likely to be considered something akin to magic. Psionics may be revered and respected, feared and hunted, or trapped and enslaved by the populace, depending on their view of "magic." Sesheyan shamans sometimes demonstrate psionic skills based on their faith and primitive rituals. It may take some convincing to show them the similarities between their "magic" and the psionic skills practiced by other races.

Adventure Hooks

▼ The heroes discover a world settled by colonists more than 300 years ago. A navigational error sent the colonists off course and carried them into the reaches of unknown space. They were fortunate enough to find a habitable world and began to practice their anti-technological beliefs in the extreme. In only a few generations, all advanced technology was eradicated from the colony, and their descendants recall only vague stories about their ancestors "coming from the distant stars." The technology of the colony is roughly PL 3.

However, some of the colonists have developed psionic abilities. The superstitious people are mistrustful of psionics, and anyone openly displaying such abilities is lynched by an angry mob. An underground of psionics exists, secretly trying to help their people and hoping to find a homeland of their own where they will be safe from persecution. They may take the arrival of the heroes as a sign. A mindwalker hero might even

have visions or "hear" telepathic cries for help, leading them to investigate.

▼ Strange phenomena seem to be "haunting" a noble family on a planet visited by the heroes. The palace is plagued by poltergeist phenomena (objects flying around, spontaneous fires, and so forth) along with strange visions, ghostly images, unusual bouts of depression, and people behaving strangely. Many believe it is the ghost of the Duke's late wife, who died in a tragic accident.

Unknown to the Duke, his teenaged daughter is a powerful mindwalker just coming into her abilities. The local prejudice against psionics, the girl's "proper" upbringing, and the loss of her mother when she was young have caused her to repress her talents, which are manifesting through her unconscious thoughts and feelings. A mindwalker hero might be able to determine the true cause of the "ghost."

A complication comes in the form of one of the Duke's courtiers, who was behind the "accident" that claimed the Duchess' life. (He intended to kill the Duke.) He fears that the Duchess' ghost really has come back to haunt him. He might be driven to try to kill the Duke's daughter if he discovers the girl is psionic, since he'll assume that she can read his mind and discover his guilt.

True Magic

All of the above options assume that "magic" in the ALTERNITY game is simply some kind of technology (even psionic "technology") masquerading as magic. It's also possible to add true fantasy magic and creatures into an ALTERNITY setting, creating a combination of science and sorcery. The special effects ("FX") rules from the *Gamemaster Guide* provide guidelines for using magic to create a science-fantasy campaign.

In such a setting, magic might always have existed, or it might be a fairly recent occurrence. Many science-fantasy settings have a world-altering event where magic becomes a reality and civilization must deal with the repercussions of it.

Magic can be an expansive power (existing everywhere in the universe, or at least the galaxy) or a very localized one (existing only in certain areas of space, certain planets, or even specific places on a planet). Localized magic can even be added to a regular SF campaign setting like STAR*DRIVE as a one-time occurrence. For example, a particular stellar phenomenon might alter the nature of certain physical laws, allowing magic (or something very like it) to exist. When the phenomenon fades, the magic goes with it. It will be back, but not for another 20,000 years or so, when the proper celestial alignments happen again. Strange drivespace accidents can temporarily strand heroes in a region where magic seems to replace science and the right ritual is required to restart the stardrive before the strange creatures outside the ship manage to get in. Perhaps the Orlamu are correct and drivespace is the Divine Unconscious, the primal force of creation. Who knows what might be possible there?

Adventure Ideas

▼ The heroes are on a planet near a black hole. The black hole draws off stellar gases from the nearby sun, creating a colorful "whirlpool" effect around its event horizon. Every few centuries, the planet and the black hole come perilously close to each other—not enough to damage the planet significantly (although bad weather and earthquakes are common at that time) but enough to make space travel difficult. The close proximity of the singularity does have a strange effect, however. For a few days or even weeks, magic is possible on the planet. People who perform the correct rituals can cast spells, creating amazing effects. The singularity might enhance innate psionic ability, or it might create an area of space-time highly sensitive to thought, causing reality to conform itself to the desires of individuals in the right state of mind. The elaborate spellcasting rituals are used to evoke the right state of mind but can be disastrous if done wrong.

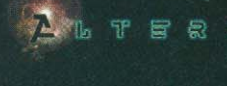
A fan of both science-fiction and fantasy, Steve Kenson likes to combine them in RPGs, which is probably why he writes stuff for so many of them. He still fondly recalls exploring the wrecked starship from Expedition to the Barrier Peaks.

AD&D Meets ALTERNITY

A drivespace accident or an encounter with something like a singularity or a precursor artifact might catapult ALTERNITY heroes into a parallel universe where magic really works. This could be an existing AD&D® campaign setting like the GREYHAWK® or FORGOTTEN REALMS® campaigns, or a parallel of the STAR*DRIVE campaign setting, with fraal, weren, sesheyans, and other aliens as fantasy races on a magical world. (For more on using the ALTERNITY aliens in your AD&D campaign, see the "AD&D Aliens" articles in issues #251, #253, and future issues.) Perhaps the crashed starship in the classic AD&D adventure Expedition to the Barrier Peaks originated in the STAR*DRIVE galaxy! The Tale of the Comet AD&D boxed set also provides ideas for adding SF elements to an AD&D campaign. The stranded ALTERNITY heroes must find a way back to their own universe while dealing with the locals who want them as allies or who simply wish to capture the secrets of their advanced technology. The heroes might find allies in the form of player-characters from that setting, letting the players' AD&D PCs to meet their ALTERNITY heroes!

By the same token, an encounter with a well of many worlds or the destruction of a sphere of annihilation might send a group of AD&D characters into the STAR*DRIVE galaxy. It's up to the DM whether AD&D magical items and spells function at full power, reduced power, or even at all in the STAR*DRIVE setting. (The PLANESCAPE® setting provides ideas on cross-planar uses of magic.) AD&D PCs are likely to be confused by a confrontation with space travel (although SPELLJAMMER® characters tend to take it in stride). If magic does not function well, the characters must find another means of getting back home.

It might even be possible for an ALTERNITY starship and a spelljamming ship to meet on opposite sides of some kind of spacial rift or anomaly like a black hole or a precursor artifact that exists in both universes (perhaps that race traveled across dimensions as well as space or even originated in a magical AD&D universe).



Guardian of the Barrow

by Nancy Varian Berberick

illustrated by Roger Raupp

In time it came to be
When war crashed
Daring Hygelac fell
Swords sought Heredred
Shattered shields

in long later days,
wild upon the land,
the dauntless king died,
his high-hearted son,
into death's maw swept him.

Then Beowulf ruled
the Geat lands
Wise and strong
Many winters he warded
until in dark nights
Fierce, a dragon rose

the bright battle-king
passed into his keeping.
that good king.
the people's weal
another came to rule.
up in fire and flame!

The king stood in ash and ruin, Beowulf in the dragon-wrecked hall. Beorn, men had named the hall. "Bear," for the king himself whose strength none could match. Against all foemen Beorn had proved its name. Until the dragon came.

My king, my beloved uncle, he looked around him in the cold spilling light at the wyrm's wicked craft: the corpses lying sprawled in the ruin of burst casks and splintered tables, the shattered benches where these dead once sat alive to drink and eat and tell brave tales. Any who saw would say the corpses were burnt beyond knowing. Burnt to black skin and white bone! But they were not beyond Beowulf's knowing. He was their king; he knew them every one. I saw it on him as he stood in their pyre, the reckoning and the grieving.

Ash and embers glared from drifts of char, a hundred fiery eyes spying on our sorrow. Sickened, I lifted my eyes, sought other sights. Not much better did I find, the wrecks of smithies and bake-houses, byre and barn and cooper-huts, all with their full share of dead. Nothing did that dragon leave but ruin, fodder for grief. No man of the hall now lived but Beowulf and I.

Yet a thing or two had kept whole in the ruin of Beorn, one the small table that had been always beside the king's high-seat to hold his wine and his meat. Before this Beowulf now stood, straight as an ashwood shaft, strangely still. Hard as it would have been to see the king fall to weeping, fearsome to hear him howling his rage, those couldn't have been worse than this terrible calm as he stood in the wreck of his hall with gray smoke snaking round his knees.

Smoke, like a small ghost of the mighty dragon who'd struck while Beowulf was away.

"Come hunting with me, uncle," I'd said to him, two nights before when the moon hung full and stags went soft-stepping on the green hills. Wiglaf Hunter, that's how men called me since first I learned to wield bow and spear. That night the shadowy scent of the Falling stirred up my blood. I wanted to run and chase and bring down prey. High-gabled Beorn couldn't hold me. Beowulf knew it. He'd taken up his bow and his quivers, happy to grant this wish of mine as he'd been happy to grant all others.

He came home to grief.

Beowulf waved me to the table. "Come look, Wiglaf. I've found something in the ruin."

I went to him in the streaming moonlight, stepping over corpses and wreckage. Upon the ash-covered table lay a worked leather scabbard with a sword fitted in. No amount of char and ash could veil the jewels imbedded in the sword's grip.

From out in the night came the soft sound of a horse snorting. Swift, I nocked an arrow to bow as one, two, three figures came walking, each holding a flaring torch and leading a horse. More came behind them. I lowered the bolt. Here were men I knew, dressed in ring-mail, carrying weapons and come from across the hills to see if any yet lived here. One of them saw us and he spoke a word to the others. Though they went and looked at the dead, though some sent up wails of woe upon finding a kinsman or a friend, none came into the ruined hall. They let the king be private.

Beowulf had no mind for these grim guests, only the beautiful weapon on his table.

"The sword is named Bane," he said to me. "It was your father's, given to me to hold 'til it was time for you to take it up." Soft, he said. "Wiglaf, it is time."

His words changed the night. Now I saw only the sword on the ashy table, the weapon of Weohstan the Scylfing. Man and weapon, each was known to me only in song. I slipped Bane from the sheath. The grip fit well into my hand. The blade gleamed in the moon's light, and gods moved upon it, Tiw and Freyr and Thunor himself, who is man's protector and friend, all worked into the iron by a smith's skill-blessed hand. And the balance. Ah, the balance was steadfast as that between sun and moon.

"Uncle," I whispered. "There never was such a sword as this."

"That's as it should be," he said, his voice warm and low. A look came on him to make me think of one glancing over his shoulder to a place he'd never go again. "Your father deserved no less than this good sword."

They had been friends, Beowulf and Weohstan my father. All the songs said so. More than that, by law kinsmen, for Weohstan had married the king's niece, Willa Swan Neck, who is my mother. Beowulf had wept when he heard the news of bold Weohstan's death.

"That sword," said the king, "is more than a relic of Weohstan. Do you know it, Wiglaf?"

I knew. The hottest feud now burning at Geatland's borders started when my father killed a Scylfing prince with this sword. He put to death a man of his own kin, the traitor who'd raised rebellion against the rightful Scylfing king. Though the betrayer had died, his rebel kinsmen prevailed, and my father was driven into exile. He came here to Geatland where Beowulf ruled, and not long after he and my mother made me, Weohstan the Scylfing died bravely in the borderland between his old home and his new. Beowulf's friend, the defender of his marches, went away to death mourned by good men and hated by the false king in his old homeland.

That hatred I'd inherited along with my father's name, and I didn't care. In life there will be men who love you and men who hate you. All but fools know that. What I cared about, most and always, was that I be the man my father was, deserving of my king's friendship and faith. Now, standing in the ruin of Beorn, I put my own foot upon Weohstan's good path.

"King," I said. "Word will fly fast that your hall is down to the ground. The Scylfings hate you for the good you did my father. They'll be the first to come snarling across the borders to see if you are dead. We must look to those borders now."

Beowulf nodded, not to agree but to tell me he'd heard. His mind was turned toward a nearer foe. With his finger he traced an ashy map on the table. He showed me where the Whale's Ness lay, the tall headland by which seamen steered.

"Just south of here," he said, "the land drops suddenly down to the sea in stony cliffs. And see, here is a tall barrow. Here is the dragon's den."

"How do you know?"

He skinned his teeth in a mirthless smile. "Because I know my kingdom, and all the lands around. Where else in the land would a dragon find a good home but in a barrow so tall? That's where we will find this old land-burner."

He was all of iron, the king in the moonlight. Iron-gray hair, iron beard, and sweat glistening on him as the water of a smith's quenching bath glistens on a new-born blade. Sudden excitement sprang in me, the thrill of hunter-lust and the pricking fear, woven. Every hunter knows it.

Outside the ruin one of the men shouted, pointing to the sky. A bright fiery wound ripped across the eastern sky, far away. The dragon winging home. Come morning, I knew it, we'd hear news of another hall burnt.

Beowulf looked up, his eyes like the blue edges of fire, then he looked away from the wounded sky to Bane, the marker of old strife. "Hard things will be asked of you, Wiglaf Hunter, before this work of ours is finished."

Grim, those warning words. But I was standing in the ruin of great Beorn, the famous hall burnt and broken by the dragon's wicked war-craft.

"I'm not afraid to die, uncle."

The king stood a long moment quiet, looking at me as he would see into the soul of me. So he'd looked at me often down the years, and each time he did I thought he was trying to find my father in me, Weohstan who had been his friend even to death.

"There are harder things than death to ask of a man, young Wiglaf."

"It might be there are," I said. "But I've never heard of one."

Beowulf laughed, a stern hard bark, and sudden bright eagerness came on him, storm's first lightning leaping. "Go fetch me one of those men out there and be sure he has a fast horse. I have an errand for him." He swept the table clean of the map, flung the kingdom into the glimmer and the moonlight. "From the rest find me eleven of the bravest and tell them they are going hunting with the king."

His words hummed in me, as the bowstring hums after the arrow's flight. He trusted me to choose the best, the strongest, the bravest. So he had trusted my father, his old friend. Proud as though he'd bestowed gold-gifts upon me, I went to do as the king asked.

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Two days later, at the end of a long morning riding, we dragon-hunters heard the sea, deep-voiced in the east. Behind us lay the greenwood. Ahead, the thin-grassed dunes surged as though they were outriders of the sea.

"Sounds like a dragon roaring far off," said the youngest of us, Gifre Ceol's son.

One of the hunters laughed scornfully. "How do you know that, boy? Ever seen a dragon?"

Gifre flushed red as the downy beard on his cheeks. "No. I haven't. But we'll hear it roaring soon enough, won't we? Shouting its death-call."

Fear ran in his voice, a thin dread he tried to hide behind boasting. I saw the whites of his eyes and thought of a skittish horse ready to bolt. One and another, the dragon-hunters glanced at the king, wanting reassurance, but Beowulf had nothing to say. Some were heartened by his

stern silence, but others seemed to have taken a taste of Gifre's unspoken fear. Came the verse of a well known poem to mind, a praise-song made long ago for the king, good words and true to tell the tale of a monster-slaying. Strongly I called out:

Wild monster!
on his shoulder
those bone-locks burst.
Grendel fled the
life-sick he ran,
sought his drear home
His life's end loomed,
His count of days ended,
his wounds gaped wide
sinews sprang apart;
All glory was Beowulf's.
fiery fierce pain,
hid under the hills,
to drink bitter knowledge:
longed to catch him now.
dark and desperate.

One man caught the rhythm of the old song from me, then another, and another, and soon all the troop of us sang out the verses, warming away fear at the fire of our king's great glory.

Beowulf might have smiled to hear that old song, or he might not have. I never knew, for he never looked around. He kept us riding hard and ahead.

At the end of the day the king led his war-band to the hold of thane Ceol, he who was young Gifre's father. There we were promised food and drink and good places to sleep in the hall. More than that did Beowulf receive, a shield proudly handed him by Ceol himself.

"Here, king, is what your messenger asked me to make. I put my best smiths to the task."

The shield was of lindenwood, as all shields are; but the wood was covered in iron, the metal polished and gleaming in the last light of a blood-red sun.

"See, Gifre," said the king to the young hunter. "This is the shield that will turn the dragon's fire." With one hand he lifted the buckler that Ceol had needed both hands to offer. He shook it and he bared his teeth in a warrior's grin, no mirth, no mercy. "And this," he said, his sword Claw suddenly in hand. "This is the sword that will leap out from behind the shield and kill the beast!"

We dragon-hunters cheered, strutting like crested cocks. Some believed their boasts, and others tried to, hoping to warm away cold fear with promises to return from battle with gold and jewels and mighty weapons. The older men laughed good-naturedly to hear us, and the women who came out to tell us the board was set up with good food and drink marveled at the shield, praising the dragon-hunters.

"Come in," they said then, the pretty girls and the mothers and aunts. "Come in and eat!"

There wasn't one of us turned away that invitation.

In the night, after a full feast of good food and drinking, when all had gone to find places to sleep, I lay awake, my mind filled with thoughts of the battle to come, of talons and claws and flames pouring out from wide, fanged jaws. Nor was I the only one haunted. Gifre sat near, tying on his shoes and looking for his cloak. Soon he'd go take his turn to keep watch at his father's hall door.

Whispering, he said, "It's not a boar or a stag, this dragon, Wiglaf. We can't take it down with spears and arrows." He slipped his sword from its sheath, testing the edge with his finger. A little, he laughed. "All other times, iron looks strong."

"Not tonight?" I asked.

"Not tonight. Wiglaf, there's not a man among us but the king himself who's faced such a monster as we are hunting. And not even he has fought one of the great dragons."

"Are you afraid?"

"No." Then, eyes low, "Yes. Are you?"

"Fear is fear," I said. "It's how you face it that makes you brave or a coward."

I thought of my father Weohstan whose faithfulness all men remember as a bright thread in many a poet's song. As though I were reaching for Weohstan's own hand, I closed round the jeweled grip of his sword. Bane was the marker of an old and deadly strife that might even now be rekindled beyond Geatland's borders, but it was not only that. It was god-marked, and so it was hallowed.

"Listen," I said, "there are gods here tonight, Gifre. The very ones on this sword. Put your hand on mine."

He did.

"Say what I say."

He nodded, swallowing hard.

"Stand by me in battle, O Tiw. Lend me courage, mighty Freyr."

Stand by me, Gifre echoed. Lend me courage.

And soft, to the protector of all mankind, we whispered, "God-Thunor, whatever it is may be asked of me, though it is harder than even death, I ask your help to keep me faithful before it."

No gods spoke to reply, but their images shone in the firelight so that it seemed they stirred upon the iron to answer and hearten us.

"Now go and watch," I said to Gifre. "Keep your father's hall safe, and the gods will keep you."

He did go, and I turned onto my side, ready to sleep. Turning, though, I found I was not the only one in the hall left awake. Beowulf stepped out from the shadows at the back of the hall, wrapped in his blue woolen cloak. He went to the failing long-fire, seeking warmth. For a long time he stood there motionless, a grace of golden firelight flickering on him. It wasn't the flames he watched though, as men do when they are rapt in thought. He stood watching the hall and all the sleeping folk. You'd have known it only to see him, a warden, a father at the bedside of his children, that he loved these people, hall-folk and hunters, as he loved all those who lived in his kingdom. They were the breath in his mouth, the ground beneath his feet; lowly or high-born, they were as water to quench him, sun to warm him. So he had loved his Geatlanders all the years of his long life, the champion of two kings, himself a king. That my own eyes saw, my own heart did.

And yet this man who stood and looked upon all that gave him joy had a heaviness on him, as one who looks upon future deaths.

Perhaps I moved. Maybe he only heard me breathing. However it was, Beowulf's glance fell on me, and at once his warning to me sprang into my mind.

A harder thing than death might be asked of me.

"Uncle," I said, thinking that now I must ask him what that rede meant.

But him, he lifted a finger to his lips and whispered.

"Hush, all is well, Wiglaf Hunter." Then he turned his face away.

After that I fell asleep, but a time or two I woke, and so I knew that Beowulf watched all the night through.

On the next day we rode hard and fast along grassy downlands, running always with gleaming strand and shining sea on our left. Now the Whale's Ness rose up in the north, the high dark headland by which seamen steered their crafts. When the sun touched noon we found a winding path between two tall dunes, south of the Ness and down to the sea where the land sheered off to the shore.

I stood upon the beach, my back to unsettled waters. Chill raised up nape-hair as I saw that for some little while we'd been riding not upon the solid land but upon a hollow hill, a great green barrow where only a few windswept trees grew in small clutches. The mouth of that barrow gaped wide and dark. All the hunters fell silent when they saw the entrance to the old wyrm's hole. Fire, just a little, one thin line, ran out from the darkness. It stank of sulfur, and it rose in little leaping flames then fell to stream, all in rhythm, as does the breath of a sleeping man.

"Look," whispered Gifre, close beside me. He pointed toward the barrow mouth. Small glints and gleams pricked the darkness within."The dragon's hoard."

Or the dragon's fangs and talons gleaming in the light of the sleeping beast's fiery breath.

"Each man take his horse away," I said. "The stink of their fear will wake the dragon."

I gave my mount into Gifre's care, upon the king had come a look that chilled me deeper than dragon-fear. It was that same look of brooding sorrow I'd seen the night before.

I closed my eyes and saw burnt Beorn, broken in the dark night, looking like the ravaged ribcage of a killed beast, the heart and soul of it flown. Understanding struck me like an arrow out of Winter, and it stabbed my heart as deeply as any flinty bolt. I knew now what death Beowulf had looked upon in the night.

With only a glance, Beowulf affirmed the truth: He didn't doubt he could do the work he'd come here to do, and he didn't think he'd be riding home after.

"Time has come." He tapped his mailed breast. "I hear it in here, my own soul whispering: I've lived a long life, and a good one. Now gods are abroad looking for me."

"Uncle," I said, my mouth dry as ash. "You can't know that. No man can know such things."

Yet the knowing sat on him, though I tried to deny. He took his blade, good Claw, out from its sheath, looked into the polished iron as one who beholds a scrying.

"In my sword I see ghosts, Wiglaf. Here in this iron I see the faces of all my dead." He looked up at me, his blue eyes glinting. "Good men all, those ghosts when they lived, and one was Hygelac who was king in Geatland, before me. He gave me this sword, a long time ago, one day when he deemed I'd earned it. And I see Hygelac's own son Heredred in Claw's iron. He died too soon!

"And your father, Weohstan the Scylfing. I see him." He grounded the sword. "But I don't see my old friend as clearly in the blade, Wiglaf, as I see him in you."

No more had I ever wanted from him! I had it now, and could not treasure it, my heart all full of sorrow and the farewell in his eyes.

He knew it, and he said that I shouldn't worry about what I couldn't change. "We all earn our deaths, Wiglaf Hunter. Whoever knows me knows I've earned this one coming. It will be a hard one, but it will be a good one."

One to earn the praise of poets, a death never to be forgotten, always to be honored. It was what he'd earned—who could doubt it?—but that comforted me not at all.

"What about your people, uncle? What about your kingdom? There are battles kindling even now. How if you aren't here to lead us?"

He took me by the shoulders, as if he would shake me; but he didn't shake me, he only held me so. In that moment I saw all his years on him, years spent in the service of two kings, as king himself. Iron gray hair and silvered beard, a face bronzed by sun and mapped by years, so he had always looked, all my young life. Not until this day had I ever seen the true age of him.

Why, he is old. He is old ...

Grim battle-ground laughter gleamed in Beowulf's blue eyes "Are you going to tell me you thought I would live forever? What man will? Not I. Now listen well: You are right. Old feuds are waking at our borders. They won't soon sleep again." The sandy ground groaned beneath my feet. "But a new and worse enemy wakes in this barrow. If I don't lay this feud, all of Geatland will be burnt to the ground before any in-comer can cross a border. And I'm not too old to do that, Wiglaf Hunter. Not yet, eh?"

The ground shivered. The fire-stream widened.

Wild and wolfish light glinted in the king's eyes now, that light before which the strongest foemen had cowered. He took up his iron-clad shield and his sword, then pointed to the dragon-hunters standing at the head of the path down from the barrow-top. Each one glanced at another, uneasy, not moving. Not the smallest boast fell from the lips of any of them.

"King," I said. "Uncle "

He tapped his chest. Time, said the gesture, it is time. "Swear me an oath, Wiglaf, and swear to me truly: Tell me you'll let me go alone to fight."

"But, uncle, you say—" The words refused speaking, I must force them. "You say your time to die has come. Take me with you then! We two will kill the dragon and—"

Again the earth rumbled. Upon the barrow-top horses reared and kicked. At the barrow's mouth the fire-stream grew wider, flames licked higher. Beowulf pressed his demand.

"Don't deny me, Wiglaf Weohstan's son!" He pointed to where my troop of hunters struggled to control their horses. "Those are your men. You and they must do what is right if I don't kill this dragon. You must avenge me and defend the kingdom. And so you see it: I need you here more than I need you to fight beside me."

Ah, that hurt, pierced to the heart of one who wanted nothing better than to be considered his trusty man, faithful in battle, his good war-companion. Still, he invoked my father, so I could do nothing but tell him I'd do as he willed.

When he had what he wanted Beowulf walked away from me, across the sand to the barrow's entrance. I stood

where he left me, thinking that this must surely be that thing harder than death he'd known would be asked of me.

I watched the king walk down the strand, toward the streaming fire, into the shadows at the barrow's mouth. My father's sword, good Bane, hung heavy in my hand. The gods marching upon the iron charged me bitterly with cravenness, but I said to them,

"Peace, O gods. Peace. Soon you might blame me for oath-breaking, but you won't blame me for worse."

Shadows claimed Beowulf, hid him from my sight. I followed after, quick and quiet.

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Stonework had been done at the barrow's door. In a far time giants had raised a broad sweeping arch to frame the way into the hill. A trickle of fresh water ran out from the gaps wind and rain had made in the stone, patient silvery trace working to undermine what long ago had been made. There, before the giant-craft Beowulf stood, and sunlight from behind glinted off his iron shield, off his mail shirt and boar-crested helm. One moment of perfect silence hung over us. I heard no sea-bird, nor even the sea itself. Then came a hissing from within the wyrm's lair. Foul-smelling fumes ran out along the fire-stream. That stream became a river of running flame to bar Beowulf from the lair, from the dazzling hoard within.

"I've come for your gold," Beowulf thundered, casting the only fear a dragon knows. "You've killed folk of mine, old wyrm, and I've come for the wer-gild!"

Deep within its hole, the guardian of the barrow gave voice. The ground beneath my feet trembled and groaned. My knees turned weak, then suddenly strong enough to carry me running from that place, but I didn't run. Dry-mouthed, afraid to the bone, I stayed, Bane to hand and ready.

Beowulf lifted the iron buckler. "Come out!" he stormed, taunting, and fire poured from the darkness.

The air near the cave was thin and rank, so hot it hurt the lungs. Coiled like a snake, scaled hide gleaming in the orange light, the dragon hissed. Clouds of sulphurous steam rolled out of the darkness. I could see nothing! Then, once more, I could see—and wished I couldn't.

All of brawn and scale and talon, that wyrm, high as five tall men. Gleaming fangs crowded in the mighty jaws. My belly shrank and cramped with terror. I clung to my father's sword as to a life-line. The dragon roared; flame shot out from its maw.

Beowulf hefted his shield. Fire broke upon the iron as sea on stone. He raised up Claw and swung the shining war-edge down, pierced the dragon's scaled hide. The dragon shrieked, its terrible voice echoing and re-echoing. Blood ran steaming, black as midnight, burning all it touched. The sand where it fell melted hard into glass.

On the barrow-top men cheered. I heard young Gifre's voice above them all.

The king attacked again. Claw glanced from the dragon's scales, turned back upon the wielder. Ah, but Beowulf mastered the sword. Never doubt it. With all his might, he struck the next blow.

The faithless blade!

Claw failed its master, broke beneath the king's strength. The hoard-guard bellowed so loudly that the worked stone, ancient gray arch of giants, trembled.

No voice called cheer from the hill.

Swift, I turned to see why the silence. I was in time to see them run, one and all fleeing the hill.

"Cowards!" I shouted.

I cursed. I cried after them, shouting that they owed their king better. None heeded. Eleven bold sons of noble men left their king to his doom and shamed me, shamed me.

The dragon swelled in rage. It drew back its head and lunged, spewing fire.

Beowulf darted to the side, thrusting his shield before him, but the canny wyrm guessed his move. Twisting suddenly, it swept the king from his feet with its thick, slashing tail. Red as summer's sun setting, I saw Beowulf's blood smeared upon the stony ground, king's blood, sacred as prayers.

I cried, "No!" and curses after that. Rage cleansed my heart of fear. Shame for the cowards who abandoned their king stoked that rage-fire. My father's sword high, I broke my ill-sworn oath.

I stabbed at the dragon's spiny tail, thrust the blade between green scales. Black blood spilled, hissing and steaming. The wyrm turned swiftly, all its fangs gleaming, dripping blood and spittle. Again I stabbed, now at the beast's head, for the eye to blind it. Fire licked out at me, surged past me.

The king! O you gods who watch here now, protect the king from this!

I smelled flesh burning, and I kept stabbing at the beast, looking for a way to hurt it, to blind it. At last I struck well, up under the scales near an eye bigger around than my own head. Blood spilled, flowing, and the dragon fled back into the barrow.

My triumphant shout drowned in the king's sudden cry. In me fear swelled: He's burnt! I smelled the flesh cooking, sickeningly like the scent of roasting meat at the evening meal. I renewed my attack on the dragon, wild to flush it out of its hole, but Beowulf pulled me back from the barrow's dark mouth. With all his strength he dragged me away.

Gulls cried in the sky, loud in the sudden stillness. The sea surged and fell, and the sound of it roared too loudly in my ears, pounded against all my senses in a storm of pain. Then I knew who'd been burnt by the dragon's fire and who had not been.

Skin hung in black shreds from my forearm, muscle showed red and glistening. What my eyes saw, finally my flesh understood. I dropped to my knees, belly heaving drily, wrenching nothing from me but groaning and bile. And though I closed my eyes tight, there was no hiding from what I now knew; even in darkness still I saw naked muscle, burnt skin. Still I felt the scathing pain each time the salt air breathed on me.

Once more the fire of the dragon's fury surged out from the barrow. Beowulf went to his knee beside me, gathered me close. I saw all things then clearly, brightly in the glare of my pain. I saw the sweat and the blood on him, mingling

in trails down to his beard. He was hurt, but not to death. Ah, not him. He flung up his shield and protected us both. Not so long did the iron serve us now; it bubbled and melted. Standing no better against the dragon's searing breath than had my own flesh, it burned to the boss.

"Up!" the king shouted, hauling me to my feet.

He dragged me away from the barrow-mouth, tried to get me back to the strand and the path away.

"No!" I snarled, wrenching free of his grip. Bracing against the giants' stonework, I bent and snatched Bane from the ground. The dragon had hurt me. Oh, aye, it had hurt me; but it had made a mistake. It had burnt my buckler-arm and left my sword-arm whole and strong.

"Curse me for an oath-breaker, uncle, but you won't fight this dragon alone." Panting and groaning, hardly able to push words out my mouth, I thrust out my arm, showed him the ruin of blackened flesh and white bone gleaming. "I'm owed something for this—I am! And you can't give it to me."

I hefted my sword. Bane was the only weapon we had besides the belt-knife Beowulf wore. It didn't matter, it couldn't matter now.

"Uncle, we're wasting time."

Bright flashed the warrior's grin, the dread of his enemies, mortal man and monster. Beowulf's laughter rose louder than sea-thunder, wild challenge to the dragon in the barrow.

The old land-burner took up the dare.

Like storm-wind, the rush and roar of the wyrm, and fire poured out from its fanged maw, licking flame. We had no shield to help us, our ring-mail did us no good. Bellowing, its stenchful breath afire, fangs dripping, the dragon lunged at the king.

Beowulf struck with his knife, rammed the blade up under the scales covering the wyrm's breast, then twisted to deepen the harm. Screaming, the dragon flung back, pulling the weapon from Beowulf's hand. Swift, it clawed the jeweled dagger from its breast, flung the treasure aside as it lunged again, great wings wide.

Foul steam and fire and the dragon's wings hid the king from me.

"Uncle!' I shouted. "King!"

How could he have heard me over the dragon's raging? How could I have heard him if he called to answer?

Then the dragon surged up on huge hind legs and I saw Beowulf snatch up his knife from the ground. He struck with deadly swiftness. This time he opened the wyrm's pale and glistening belly.

The dragon lunged, jaws wide, wings beating the air, hiding the king from me again.

Howling like a madman, in rage, in searing pain, I leaped over the streaming fire. With all my strength and such hatred as I have never felt since, I sent Bane's god-touched blade plunging deep into the white underbelly of the beast.

With the sword of Weohstan the Scylfing I loosed the black blood. I finished the work Beowulf had begun.

At my feet the fire-stream fell and dwindled, even as the dragon died. Nothing remained but the old hulk, lifeless, its spirit flown away on the last dying groan. Laughing, I turned to find the king and saw him just beyond the hulk.

Joy ran out of me. Bane fell from my grip. Pain came rushing back, all the fiery pain and more and worse than wounding.

Beowulf lay covered in blood, motionless as the fallen dragon.

I stood in a different day, though sun had not set, though night had not finished a march. I stood in a day no poet had ever dreamed. Beowulf lay wrenched and broken, bleeding on the sand. The dragon had torn the flesh of his neck and shoulder, chewed the brawn and broken the bones. Some things that wyrm didn't get, though, and one was the soul of him. I saw it glinting, still bright, still battle-keen, in his eyes.

"Wiglaf Hunter," Beowulf said, rasping. "Are you well?"

"Well enough."

"Is the dragon dead?"

"Yes," I whispered.

"Show me."

"No, uncle. No. You can't be moved. You must lie still and save your strength."

A small, tight smile twitched at the corners of his lips. "Save it … for whom?"

"For your people." I brushed his blood-matted hair from his forehead. "For your kingdom."

Oh, for me!

Beowulf looked hard into my eyes, no strength to ask again, and now I couldn't refuse him. I lifted him to sit—ah, not so gently as I'd have liked, for I had but one arm to use. I showed him what he wanted to see, the dragon dead, scales tarnished, wings forever stilled, the great head of it twisted back by the last agony.

Soft, a step on the sand behind me, then another; one man whispered, another answered. In that way the unfaithful men came creeping back. Rage rose up in me, like fire in the belly.

"Come and see what you've done," I said, snarling. "Come and look what ruin your faithlessness has made!"

In silence they stood and they saw. Tears slid down the cheeks of some, others stood with faces so still they might have been stone-made.

Ah, the king, they sighed. Ah, the king…

"Coward!" I snarled, pointing to one man in his armor. "I remember the day he gave you that mail. And that sword you carry—useless iron! You had that from him, too, didn't you? Right from his hand." I looked at them all, sneering. "Not one of you but had your weapons from him, not one of you but swore to defend him to the death."

No one answered, all stood shame-fast, silent before merciless truth.

"He wasted those gifts." I spat. "He might as well have thrown them away. What good are you, standing there? You should have died defending him!"

My glance fell upon Bane, that good sword on the sand. The three bold gods marching upon the iron demanded I avenge the wrong done my kinsman. But I would have had to move to do that, I would have had to jar the king and

hurt him. Not even for the gods of my father's sword would I do that.

Rage fell away from me, leaving leaden weariness behind.

"Get out of my sight," I said. "Slink back to your homes, and be careful your women don't smell the fear-stink on you or they'll bar the doors."

They walked away, heads low, full of shame. And sorrow. Then I wouldn't have granted it, but now I will: They were sorry.

All left but one, and he was Gifre, his eyes shining with tears as he looked on Beowulf in my arms. He took up my helm from the sand and filled it with water.

"Wiglaf Hunter," he said, putting the water close to hand. "You're hurt. Let me tend you."

"No," I said. "Go to your father and get a healer for the king, a wise-woman to come and help."

He said he would, but he'd learned enough that day to make no boast as to how fast he'd go and how fast he'd come back.

I sat between the two defenders, the dragon and the king who'd come seeking its death. I tended Beowulf as best I could, cleaning the blood from him, bathing his brow and his face with the water Gifre had brought. All the while I held him gently in the crook of my one good arm.

Holding him, I listened to his breathing and sometimes I heard a hitch and a gasp and I thought, Oh, please, gods, no, he's dying. He's dying.... Then, unaccountably, he'd breathe stronger, more steadily, and I would sigh and give thanks. For reprieve, for a chance to believe that Gifre would come back in time with his father and a wise-woman, her baskets full of the herbs and potions that would save our king. Things would be well, then. Things would be well, and the king would not go from his people.

All the while the sea groaned and gulls mewed in the fading sky. By the time Gifre returned, the skirts of the sun lay full upon the Whale's Ness, staining the headland stone red as a king's blood.

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They came with a strong wain. They came with funeral cloths. They came with bandages and ointments. They brought a wise-woman with them, but she knew the thing I'd dared not admit. Beowulf would die. I saw it in her face as she turned away, in the sag of her shoulders as she sighed, "There is no hope to be found here, Wiglaf Hunter, not even in a wise-woman's chanting prayer."

"No," I said, still fighting. I stroked the king's whitened cheek. "He isn't dead, and he needs your help."

Ceol took the wise-woman by the arm and gave her gently into the hands of one of his men. His ruddy cheeks streaked with tears, he knew as well as the healer what I couldn't see, dared not see. Men ringed us round, thanes and hall-folk murmuring at the sight of their bloodied king. Beowulf stirred, and he moved his lips as though to speak. As the murmuring fell still, no man so much as breathed.

"Get me my war-gear," he said to me; and I did, helm and mail-shirt.

"Take them up," he said; and I did.

"Wiglaf Hunter," the king whispered. "Wiglaf Weohstan's son. This I know about you, though maybe you didn't think I did: You've all your life to be to me what your father had been."

I begged him not to speak and the old fire leapt in his eyes, bright in the gathering darkness.

"You couldn't be that, my Wiglaf, for all that you wanted to be." He turned his head a little, the better to see the hulk of his fallen foe. "That dragon ... if it never had a name, it has one now. Do you know the dragon's name, Wiglaf?"

"No. Uncle, no. How can I?"

"The dragon's name is Cyningsmið," he sighed. "King Maker." He put his hand upon the shining boar-helm. Tears clawed at my throat. "Now you must be what Weohstan never could be. You're the last, Wiglaf Hunter; son of my sister's daughter, the last of my kin. No more remain."

Beowulf stopped to gasp for his breath. A bubble of blood rose up at the corner of his mouth.

"I can see it when I close my eyes, Wiglaf. The feud fires burning, aye, all long the kingdom's bounds. Take my battle-gear," he whispered. "Use it well. Young king, go from here and defend your borders."

And so, here at last was that thing harder than death of which he'd spoken. A thing darker than a raven's wing, more lorn than a wolf's high howling. We knew it, we two, who understood that this young king would fight as hard as he could, with all his might and will and daring, and yet never be what Beowulf had been, that shining champion his people needed.

Death would be easier than knowing what I now knew.

"But you must hope," Beowulf said, reading my heart as he always had. "You must hope, so that your people may." Ah, I hardly heard the words so faint were they. "You have the courage for that. I know it better than any man."

Something more he'd have said. He drew the breath to speak it, but that breath taken was his last. Though I leaned close, I couldn't hear the final word slipping from his lips.

Soft, the breeze off the sea, and very gentle the sound of the waves a-lap at the shore. I bowed my head and wept, for Beowulf dead in my arms, for the kingdom that had lost him.

And, aye, for myself, orphaned and crowned all in the same moment by the dragon Beowulf had named Cyningsmið.

When I stood again, my legs were no stronger or steadier than a just-born foal's. I found my bearing quickly, though, and raised up my head so all could see that I'd done with weeping.

So should do a king of Geatland.

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With great effort we, all of us, pushed the hulk of the dragon to the edge of the sea and into the waters. Big as it was, that was no easy task. We did it, though, even I who took only time to have my wounds dressed. I cared not for the pain, none abated for ointments and bandages. I wanted only to wipe away all trace of the murderous wyrm, leave nothing of it to foul the earth. And then we ravaged the dragon's hoard, took out all the gold and all the silver, the

plate and the jewelry, the hidden treasures long-ago buried. Gifre said he heard a ghost whispering in that barrow, a man's voice ragged and thin, telling him things, mourning, weeping.

"A man," he said, "from ancient kin who walked on the earth in days so far gone none can reckon them."

The last of his kin, he'd hidden away all the treasure of his folk and gone into the barrow with it to die. So Gifre said. True it is we found ancient bones in there, a man's leaning up against the hill of treasure, yet wearing his war-gear, bone-fingers gripping a sword.

"Take it all," I said, not caring if it belonged to ghosts before the dragon had come to lie in the barrow, not caring if ghosts would mind the loss. It would be here as it was in all battles: Who wins takes the wealth.

They did as I bid, talking among themselves about how a young king with such a treasure would be able to outfit the finest army ever known to fight his border-battles now. I let them talk, but I made sure they worked, dragging glittering jewels and gold out of the hill.

Then we sent back for wood, great wagons full of it. With that wood we built a pyre high upon the Whale's Ness. I kept back a portion of the treasure we hauled out of the dragon's barrow, kept as fuel for my coming war the smallest part of it, greater than the hoard of any king in this Middle World. I put all the rest beneath that pyre. I had a chamber of stone fitted around the heaped jewels to protect them from the fire to come. Some men wondered, others cried protest against the burying of the hoard.

I stilled them all. This gold was not mine, it was not ours. It belonged to Beowulf who'd earned it with his life. With Beowulf it would stay.

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At the end of the second day since his death we laid the king upon his last bed, our Beowulf whose like would never come again. We wept and we sorrowed, and some of us made praise-songs to tell all who would later hear that Beowulf was the best of all kings in this world, the strongest, the highest of heart, the most worthy of fame.

All night the pyre burned, lighting up the sky, till at last it fell to ash and char and red embers like a thousand eyes glaring round the bones, spying on our grief.

In the morning we set to work again to build a high barrow round it all to lock in the bones of our king and the ancient treasure. When the work was done at last, I looked away to the west where it seemed to me that the red light staining the sky was more than the light of sun setting.

Feud-fires burned at our borders there, kindled long years ago by my own father. They would burn hotter now that Beowulf was dead, now that I, son and nephew of the men the Scylfings most hated, stood in his place. Geatland lay naked to her enemies, with only this young king to defend her.

"King," Gifre said. The word sounded strange in my ears. "King, how will it be for us now?"

Now that our enemies will soon learn Beowulf is gone.

"We'll do what we must, Gifre. Your home is still your home, your kin still your kin. You and I, we'll fight as hard as we can to keep them whole and hale."

It frightened me then, his reaction to what I said, for he didn't doubt, he didn't question more. He simply accepted my word and put his home, his kin, himself, into my hands, trusting the untried king. I began to understand the love I'd seen, some nights before as I watched Beowulf attending to the night in Ceol's hall. I began to feel it stirring in my own heart, the love of a king for his own.

"Go," I said, "gather up the men and make them ready to leave here."

Alone again, I looked back to the barrow, raw and high on the headland and felt it deeply, as though for the first time since his dying, that Beowulf was gone from me, gone from his people.

Will it ever get easier to carry, the pain of his going?

"Ah, uncle," I whispered. "How will it be without you? What must I do now that enemies are rising up on all side?"

Go do what you must, said a voice in my heart. His, our guardian in the barrow stirring. *It will not be easy, and you might not win your fight, but never let your people stop hoping, young king, or they will have lost everything.*

Your people, he said. *Your people.*

Ah, mine, the air I breathe, the ground beneath my feet, water to quench me, fire to warm me. My people, my Geatlanders.

For them I did as a king would. As Beowulf would. I took up my sword, good Bane, and I prayed to the gods who marched upon that keen blade.

"Stand by me in the battle, O Tiw; lend me courage, mighty Freyr." And soft I whispered, "God-Thunor, whatever it is might be asked of me now, though it is harder than even death, keep me faithful before it."

I put my back to the pyre, the char and the ashes, and went out to gather up an army, with them to take the chance Beowulf had bought for us with his blood.

Nancy Varian Berberick is the author of five fantasy novels as well as many short stories. Among Nancy's recent work is the DRAGONLANCE® *novel* Tears of the Night Sky, *written with Linda Baker. Meanwhile, Nancy is hard at work on yet another* DRAGONLANCE *novel, a solo flight, which will appear in 1999. She would like to dedicate this story to Mark T. McPherson, who loves the old legends.*

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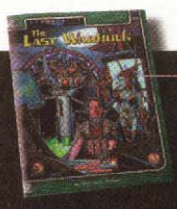

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DESIGN CONTEST

"Planar Sites" Contest Rules

1. Entry: To enter, send your completed entry form including your name, address, phone number, the contest to which your submission applies, and your proposed Planar Site or Description ("Entry") to TSR, Inc. ("TSR") DRAGON Magazine Planar Sites Contest, P.O. Box 707, Renton, WA 98057-0707. No purchase required. You may submit as many entries as you wish, but only one Entry per submission. There is no advantage to submitting the same entry more than once. Entries may not exceed 2,000 words in length. If you are under 18, you must have your parent's permission to enter. Entries must be received before midnight (Pacific Time), December 18, 1998. Winners will be selected by a team of TSR judges based on the Entry's format, originality, and appropriateness. All decisions are final. The probability of winning is based exclusively on the quality of the Entries received.

2. Originality of Entry: All Entries must be in English. Entrant warrants that the Entry written above is the original and exclusive work of Entrant, and that Entrant has not assigned, transferred, licensed, or sold the right to use the Entry to any other party. Entrant agrees to indemnify TSR against good faith claims of copyright infringement based on TSR's use of the Entry, but such indemnification shall not apply if it can be shown that Entrant had no access to the allegedly infringed work.

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4. Prizes: The first-place winner of the Planar Sites Contest shall receive a free copy of the *Inner Planes* Campaign Expansion (approximate value $19.95) signed by members of the PLANESCAPE® design team. Two runners-up will each receive a free unsigned copy of the *Inner Planes* Campaign Expansion (approximate value $19.95).

5. Eligibility: Void where prohibited by law. In order to receive any prize, Entrant agrees to sign TSR's affidavit of eligibility/release of liability/prize acceptance ("Affidavit") within 5 days of receipt of notification or forfeit prize. If the winner is a minor, then the guardian must co-sign the Affidavit. By acceptance of prize, Entrant agrees to the use of their name and/or likeness for purposes of advertising, trade, or promotion without further compensation, unless prohibited by law. TSR assumes no responsibility for, late, ineligible, incomplete, or misdirected Entries. Non-compliance with the time parameters contained herein or return of any prize/prize notification as undeliverable will result in disqualification and an alternate winner will be selected. Employees of TSR, Wizards of the Coast, Inc., and their respective affiliates and distributors are not eligible.

6. Restrictions: Void where prohibited or restricted by law. All prize winners shall be notified by phone or letter. No substitutions of prizes are allowed, except at the option of TSR, should the featured prize(s) become unavailable. All federal, state, provincial, and local regulations apply. The winner is solely responsible for all applicable federal, state, provincial, and local taxes. For a list of winners, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to DRAGON Magazine Planar Sites Contest Winners, TSR, Inc., P.O. Box 707, Renton WA 98057. Requests for winners lists must be received by November 30, 1998. Allow 4 weeks for delivery of winners list.

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"Planar Sites" Contest

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Each entry should be limited to **2,000 words** and may or may not include a map. (You decide—not every place on the planes can really be mapped!) All entries must be received by **December 18, 1998**.

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The FRAAL

FROM DISTANT CRYSTAL SPHERES, a dimension of science rather than magic, or the very same world in which you've set your AD&D® campaign, the fraal make an intriguing and mysterious addition to your fantasy world. This article is the second of a series that helps you bring your favorite alien species from the ALTERNITY® game into your own AD&D campaign as player characters.

Everyone around here will tell you he's never met a fraal . . . especially if he has.

by David Eckelberry

illustrated by Jim Holloway

Fraal are a race of thin humanoids who avoid contact with outsiders. They're a peaceful people who have a great curiosity about the outside world but are still afraid of it. They don't have even the physical power of the average halfling, and they can fall victim to many forms of attack. About the only thing that keeps them alive is the thing that keeps them together: psionics.

Ability Score Adjustments: Although fundamentally humanoid, fraal differ in many ways from humans and more common races. Initial ability scores are modified by a –2 to Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution, a +1 to Intelligence and Charisma, and a +2 to Wisdom. Fraal PCs must obey the ability score maximums and minimums in the sidebar on the next page.

Thieving Skill Racial Adjustments: Fraal PCs cannot be wizards, thieves, or bards.

Class Mixing: Bound by a focused life, fraal never indulge in dividing their attentions. Fraal PCs cannot multi-class. Single-classed fraal with extremely high ability scores in their prime requisites may gain additional levels above given racial maximums, as per Table 8 in the *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide.*

Vagabonds from another world—or plane—the fraal have no exposure to or understanding of what humans call magic. Instead, they have forever relied upon the powers of the mind to defend them, bind them together, and improve their lives.

Prayer and organized religion aren't alien to the fraal, for they are a naturally mystical race. The power of gods to grant miracles is still new to the fraal, however, and they're still struggling with the possibilities and the importance of interacting with deities.

Suggested Kits: Fraal PCs begin their careers as either outcasts or clandestine explorers, having abandoned the warmth, comfort, and protection of the fraal community for a life among strangers. The decision—or perhaps the command—to leave the familiarity of fraal minds behind forever alters the perspective of a fraal hero. No longer part of a greater community, they must discover long-forgotten reserves of individuality.

Fighter—Noble warrior (*Complete Fighter's Handbook*).

Priest—Pacifist, prophet, scholar (*Complete Priest's Handbook*).

Skills & Powers Kits—Diplomat, mystic, scholar, spy.

Hit Dice: Fraal PCs receive hit dice by class; because of their limited Constitution, it's impossible for a fraal to gain additional hit points as a result of an exceptional ability score.

Typical Alignments: With their strong ties to community and one another, the average fraal tends toward lawful. Fraal PCs can select any alignment.

Natural Armor Class: 10. (Fraal receive a –2 bonus to their Mental Armor Class (MAC). See "Fraal Psionics" below.)

Age Categories: Starting Age = 10 + 2d4 years; Maximum Age Range: 119 + 2d12 years; Average Maximum Age: 132 years; Middle Age = 50 years; Old Age = 78 years; Venerable = 119 years.

Average Height and Weight: 55 + 2d4 inches; 107 + 4d6 pounds.

Movement Base: 12.

Appearance: Slight and slender, fraal have an appearance that most resembles that of a wizened human or elf. Their appearance is entirely natural, setting in only a few days after birth. Of course, the fraal don't find their countenances at all alarming or disturbing, as many humans might.

They're tall, thin humanoids with deep, dark eyes. Older fraal appear to grow even thinner and more wispy. Hair color is diverse, ranging from red to silver to black—or they may be bald. Skin color is very pale, almost luminous and reflective.

Fraal prefer light and airy clothing including simple skirts, loose dresses, and airy blouses. To most observers, the reasons the fraal disdain heavier clothing—much less armor—is obvious. Fraal are physically weaker than human; the average halfling could easily best a fraal in a wrestling contest.

In addition to garments that flow over their anemic frames, female fraal also favor elaborate and cumbersome headdresses that extend down to fully enclose and shield the head from view. To the fraal, it's a combination of the ornate and the functional. To most, the headdresses appear a terrible burden.

Habitat: Fraal have proven that they're capable of living in just about any environment, and the only preference that can be consistently found is that they seem to cluster in extreme climates: deep deserts, high mountains, and icy glaciers. Since the fraal clearly aren't the hardiest of humanoids, the choice must stem from a reason other than comfort.

Indeed, a fraal community's decision of where to live is more likely to be based on the decisions of others. Whether by nature or learned trait, the fraal discovered to date are isolationists. They avoid direct contact with other species. Thus, as humans, elves, and other races choose verdant plains and lively forests to live in, the fraal elect to find a place apart.

Still, most fraal communities don't completely exile themselves to barren lands.

Fraal Player Characters

Starting Ability Score Range

Ability	Min	Max
Strength	3	15
Dexterity	3	15
Constitution	3	14
Intelligence	11	19
Wisdom	11	20
Charisma	3	19

Class Restrictions

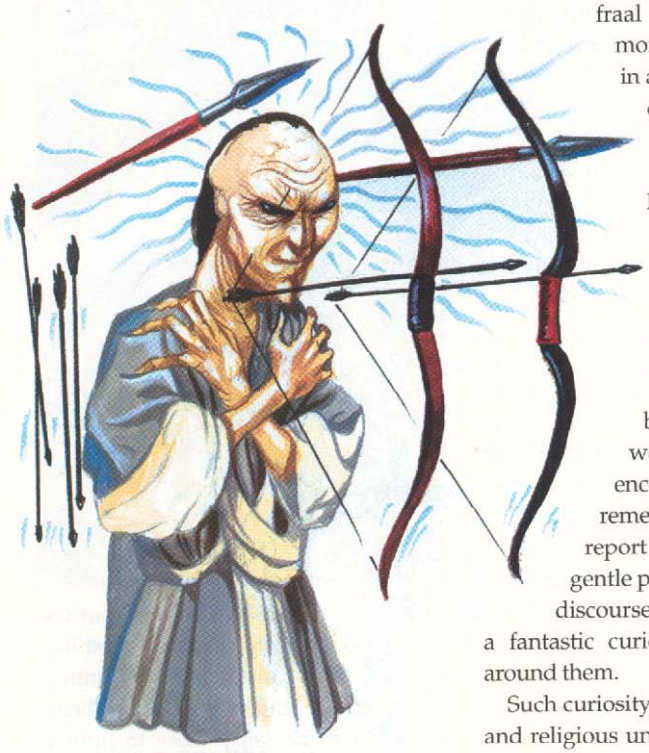
Class	Max. Level
Warrior	
Fighter	5
Priest	
Cleric	8
Specialty Priest	8
Psionicist	Unlimited

They're as curious as anyone about the world around them, and they must live in it, even if at a distance. Fraal communities have a tendency to locate themselves in wilds fairly close to human settlements; in this manner, they can learn more about their neighbors while remaining undiscovered themselves.

Of course, the choice to live outside civilized lands bears its own consequences. The rugged country is much more likely to be home to dangerous bands of humanoids, monsters, and other terrors. Even the vaunted fraal psionic ability can't protect them from every menace, and with each passing month and one or more fraal victims, a fraal community must reconsider its choices.

Likely homes for the fraal in your campaign setting are just about any desolate tract of land—especially those near the edge of the map, the frontier. The Shaar in the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting, the isolated heights of the Kron Hills of the GREYHAWK® setting, the Iron Peaks in the BIRTHRIGHT® setting, or the Ringing Mountains near Tyr in the DARK SUN® setting.

Society & Religion: For every fraal, the foundation of all existence is the



community. While each fraal firmly believes in his individual existence and the power to make independent decisions, the community has been a part of his life since literally before birth. More than any human can ever understand, the fraal benefit from the sharing of minds as well as the sharing of mere possessions.

According to fraal legend, once their way of life was different. Once the fraal lived more like other races of the world, individualistic to the extreme, devoted to personal advancement largely without concern for the "Other." Oral histories of the long past are lost even to the moderately long-lived fraal, and no one can say exactly what the fraal were like in the ancient past. That secret has remained shrouded or forgotten, just as the knowledge of their origin has become lost even to themselves.

For generations now, the fraal have lived as nomads, roaming from place to place, always remaining just out of reach of civilization. As the brothers and sisters travel, the bond between fraal is what has kept them together and kept them alive. Meanwhile, the study of other societies and cities gives them focus and meaning to their existence. Typically, a fraal community spends no more than a decade or two in a single location. By tradition, a fraal settlement relocates as soon as it suspects that outsiders have discovered them.

What's most interesting about the fraal behavior is that it is not based on any particular fear or hatred. Fraal aren't xenophobic. The few men and women that profess to encounter the fraal—and remember the experience—report that the fraal are a kind, gentle people. They enjoy social discourse, and they can't conceal a fantastic curiosity about the world around them.

Such curiosity extends to the mystical and religious universe. Priests and clerics remain rare. That said, the most popular deities among the fraal vary according to campaign setting. In the FORGOTTEN REALMS setting, the most likely power is Oghma. In the GREYHAWK setting, Rao enjoys the greatest fraal devotion. In the BIRTHRIGHT setting, Avani is most popular.

Language: Fraal have their own language, a tongue which has remained pure and unaltered for centuries. Of course, most discourse in this language occurs without the use of tongue or lips, only thought. Many fraal words are difficult, if not impossible, to actually pronounce.

Most fraal have made an effort to learn the languages of the peoples around them—another example of their interest in the world. In addition to their own tongue, fraal PCs can begin play with the Common tongue. Additional languages can be learned in the usual fashion.

Special Advantages: The fraal would consider the support of their kindred to be their greatest advantage. As for their powerful mental talents, they would never consider these talents "special." Psionics simply are a part of life, a necessary and assumed part of it. See "Fraal Psionics" for more information on fraal "mindwalking" and fraal psionicists.

As noted there, all members of the race have some psionic ability. If they're not psionicists by class, they possess wild talents, as described in the *Complete Psionics Handbook* and *PLAYER'S OPTION®: Skills & Powers*. Even if you choose not to allow psionic powers in your campaign, it's recommended that fraal be allowed to use psionic mental attack disciplines and defenses.

Special Disadvantages: The chief fraal disadvantage, mentioned above, is a distinct lack of physical power, coordination, and hardiness. While it's possible for an individual fraal to be stronger or tougher than a weak human, the truth is that the average fraal has an average score of 7 or 8 in Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution. As such, they make miserable warriors.

Fraal cannot bear to exist without companionship for long periods of time. They've grown used to the constant and friendly minds of their community, and it's quite a shock to travel in a world without the stability of the community. A fraal who remains outside the boundaries of fraal society becomes mentally unbalanced, subject to unprecedented swings of depression and anxiety. Eventually, a permanent form of insanity takes hold.

In game terms, a fraal without at least one other of his kind nearby for a month has a chance to develop a form of insanity. The base chance is a cumulative 5% per month, but the DM is free to add modifiers if the fraal has been exposed to radical experiences or disturbing events that he must attempt to process alone. (For a list of possible insanities, see the RAVENLOFT® *Domains of Dread* Campaign Book or *PLAYER'S OPTION: Spells & Magic*.) Melancholia, alienation, and dementia praecox are the most likely forms of fraal mental disorder. After a single insanity has set in, a fraal need no longer roll percentile dice every month; he's become "adjusted" to solitary existence.

If even a pair of fraal travel together, they can stave off this mental degeneration indefinitely, maintaining a sense of order in the other's thoughts. Although it has never been done, it might be possible that a fraal could form a similar bond with a psionically endowed human.

Although fraal can't be wizards, they can use magical items normally.

Weapon Proficiencies: Because the fraal espouse an almost wholly pacifistic philosophy, it's uncommon to see melee weapons in their hands. As a matter of course, they prefer to avoid confrontations. When hostilities are inevitable, the typical fraal response is to rely upon mental attack or to flee the scene.

That said, fraal warriors show a fondness for long, powerful weapons that would seem to contradict the physical weakness. This includes spears and simple polearms such as fauchards, glaives, partisans, and ranseurs. Other weapons include knives, daggers, and staves. All of them are easy to produce, and they can find use in nonmilitary applications such as farming (for the polearms) and food preparation (for the short blades).

Fraal PCs cannot begin play with a weapon proficiency other than those listed above. As a PC advances in level, the DM may allow him to select weapon proficiencies outside this list.

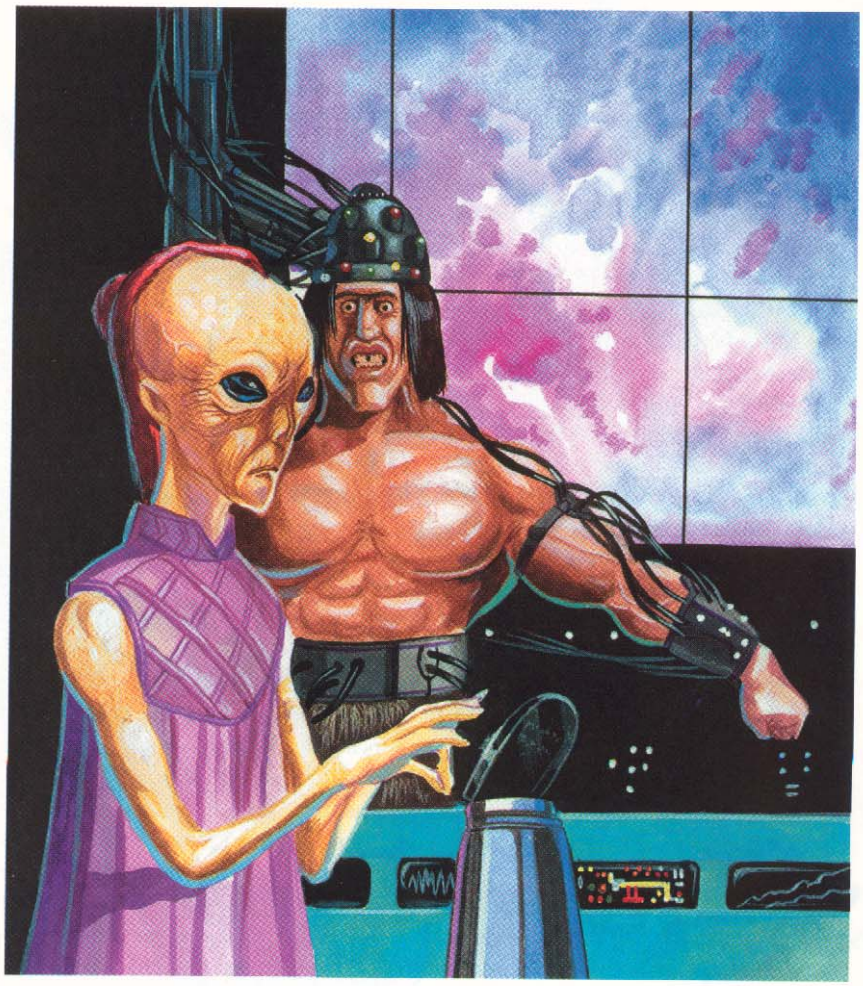
Nonweapon Proficiencies: Fraal have access to all of the proficiencies found in the *Player's Handbook*, with a few exceptions. Fraal PCs can't begin play with spellcraft, local history, or riding. They have little knowledge of magic, the surrounding area, or horses in their communities.

Thanks to their natural mental gifts, fraal begin play with certain bonus proficiencies and psionic devotions. See "Fraal Psionics" below.

Starting Possessions: A fraal character begins with a standard allotment of gold and equipment. While the fraal themselves don't spend much of their time in economic pursuits or in attempts to acquire gold, a fraal community understands that any of its people going out into the world have a need for it.

Roleplaying Suggestions: Despite their many differences—and their intelligence—fraal share in all of the diversity of emotions that humans do. They are not particularly withdrawn or reserved among their own kind, and possibly not among long friends.

A fraal PC is likely to begin play somewhat distant from his non-fraal companions, his true nature hidden. Through the use of disguise and psionic talent, a fraal can mask itself as human. Eventually, it's possible that by chance or by choice, the true nature of the character is revealed. It should present an interesting opportunity for roleplaying: Has the PC come to value and trust his companions in the wider world or does he follow traditional prohibitions against public association with other races?



Other Information: Fraal are omnivores, like humans, and eat many of the same things that humans do. Agriculturally, they limit themselves to small fields of crops that don't attract attention. For the same reason, fraal generally don't burden themselves with the upkeep of herd animals.

Fraal & Psionics

The rules presented for the fraal here presume a basic understanding of the psionics rules in Chapter 9 of *Player's Option: Skills & Powers*, the same rules as printed in the revised edition of the Dark Sun Campaign Setting, or *The Complete Psionics Handbook* (*PHBR5*).

Fraal psionicists are among the most powerful in the multiverse. Psionic contact, communication, and education begin while a fraal is gestating in its mother's womb. It continues through infancy, childhood, and adolescence.

Thanks to this continuing psionic nurturing, fraal psionicists and wild talents receive several advantages over other practitioners of mental powers. First, when determining a fraal's Psionic Strength Points (PSPs), the fraal's ability scores are considered to be one point higher than they actually are. Thus, a fraal with a 17 Wisdom has a +3 PSP bonus (not a +2 bonus). This bonus applies at every level.

Fraal, whether psionicists or simply wild talents, automatically gain two nonweapon proficiencies: meditative focus and rejuvenation. Both of these

nonweapon proficiencies are described in all three sources mentioned above.

Constantly surrounded by a culture of psionics, fraal also have an improved resistance to psionic attack and psionic powers. Any character or creature attacking a fraal with a hostile psionic power has a +2 penalty to its power score (by *PHBR5*) or a +2 to penalty to its MTHAC0. (This bonus is in addition to any MAC bonus given to high Intelligence using the *S&P* rules.)

Finally, beginning fraal psionicists and wild talents gain access to a free discipline and a free science, over and above the first normally given to 1st-level characters. This discipline must be telepathy, and the science must be mindlink, a telepathic science. Telepathy can either be the fraal's primary discipline or his first secondary one. In either case, the normal rules about choosing psionic devotions and sciences still apply.

Psionic Teamwork (Optional Rule)

Whenever two or more psionicists are working together to achieve a single result, use the following rule.

Select a psionicist to act as the lead, and designate that all others are assistants. First, the assistants make rolls as normal (either using MTHAC0 or power scores). For each assistant that generates a success, the lead psionicist receives either a –2 bonus to his power score check or a –2 bonus to his MTHAC0. Assistants who fail to generate a success apply a +1 penalty.

All psionicists who share in the action must know the psionic science or devotion used. Assistants pay one-half the normal PSP cost of the psionic power, and the lead psionicists pays the full cost. No additional preparation time is required.

New Psionic Powers

Of the Body

(telepathic science)
Skills & Powers Statistics
MAC: 8
PSP Cost: 10+/3+
Range: 50 yards
Area of Effect: Individual
Prerequisite: Mindlink

PHBR5 Statistics
Power Score: Wis –4
Initial Cost: 10+
Maintenance Cost: 5/turn/creature
Range: 50 yards
Preparation Time: 0
Area of Effect: 50 yards
Prerequisite: Mindlink, contact

A character using this power becomes "socially invisible" to those within its area of effect. Those gazing upon the psionicist still see him, but regardless of appearance, equipment, or possessions regard the psionicist as one of their own.

The base cost of activating Of the Body is 10, plus an additional 5 points for every 5 hit dice or levels that are being affected within the radius of effect (50 yards). Thus, the power is more difficult to use (and maintain) successfully among large groups.

Of the Body can be resisted using the standard psionics rules.

The fraal make use of this power to walk unnoticed in the towns of humans and other races. Because of the high cost to keep the science active, it cannot be used for long periods of time, but it does afford a fraal a chance to interact with other peoples. Most fraal that choose such a pursuit also take care to disguise their features with a heavy hood, cap, or leather coif.

Disremember

(telepathic science)
Skills & Powers Statistics
MAC: 6
PSP Cost: 9/3
Range: Touch
Area of Effect: Individual
Prerequisite: Mindlink

PHBR5 Statistics
Power Score: Int –5
Initial Cost: Contact
Maintenance Cost: N/A
Range: Touch
Preparation Time: 1
Area of Effect: Individual
Prerequisite: Mindlink, contact

Disremember operates much as the psychic science mindwipe, with specific effect. It allows the psionicist to delete memories of one thing, such as a person, an object, or even a place. The memory is completely lost to the victim and can only be restored through the successful use of psychic surgery.

Typically, this power is used in conjunction with, or after, the use of probe, ESP, or a similar power.

The fraal use this power to remove the final traces of their presence, and to clean up after accidental contact with another race.

Dave Eckelberry is hard at work finishing the next installments of this series. At least, he had better be.

Here there be *dragons...*

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THE SILENT SHADOW

Raulothim

The events that made Raulothim so thoughtful began with his chance encounter with a ship that sailed the skies.

by
Ed Greenwood

illustrated by
Storn Cook

A CENTURY AGO, the huge emerald dragon known as "the "Silent Shadow" could be seen at well-nigh every important event in the Sword Coast North—gliding overhead, just watching.

He never spoke (hence his sobriquet) and ignored most attempts to hail or attack him, serenely observing from an aloof distance and flying away when challenged—but otherwise "always there," missing nothing. Some barbarians thought him a "watching spirit" who reported to their own totem spirits or to strange gods; some sages and mages considered him a spy in service to some sinister cabal—a belief encouraged by false confirmations announced by several sorcerous brotherhoods seeking to impress others.

In truth, Raulothim served only himself. He loved riding the high winds so prevalent over the North, and he hated missing anything. The Silent Shadow didn't care if he misinterpreted what he saw, or never learned the reasons or forces behind the events he witnessed—he just hated feeling left out (and hence, lonely).

The years changed him, however, as years change all beings. These days, the great emerald wyrm called Raulothim seems more a statue than a gliding shadow. He spends long days lying motionless, gazing out over the North from the lip of his lair in the Pit of Stars, the cauldron of an extinct volcano (known to the Netherese as Xardmount) on the rocky island of Axard, the northeasternmost isle of Ruathym. The pit is named for the many blobs of volcanic glass—white, clear, and smoke-hued—that line its walls, gleaming in the sun like so many gigantic cabochon-cut gems.

The events that made Raulothim so thoughtful began with his chance encounter with a ship that sailed the skies. The ship's spelljamming crew were seeking to hide treasure on the "uninhabited" outer islets of Ruathym. When they found their treasure-burying watched over by a silently attentive emerald dragon of monstrous size, some of that crew fled through a gate they opened into another plane. Those sights shattered what the Silent Shadow thought he knew of the world. Frankly, it scared him.

How many hidden realms—and folk watching Toril from them—are there? Who are these watchers, and what are their aims? How many mages who can open such gates serve masters on those hidden worlds. Can these wizards call on sorcerous aid from their hidden masters? Did the ship's crew guess at his own innocence? Or do they consider him an agent working with a rival of theirs?

Pondering such questions, Raulothim sits and broods, mastering all the magic he can. Thus, Raulothim silently waits for the day someone who thinks he knows too much of such things seeks to

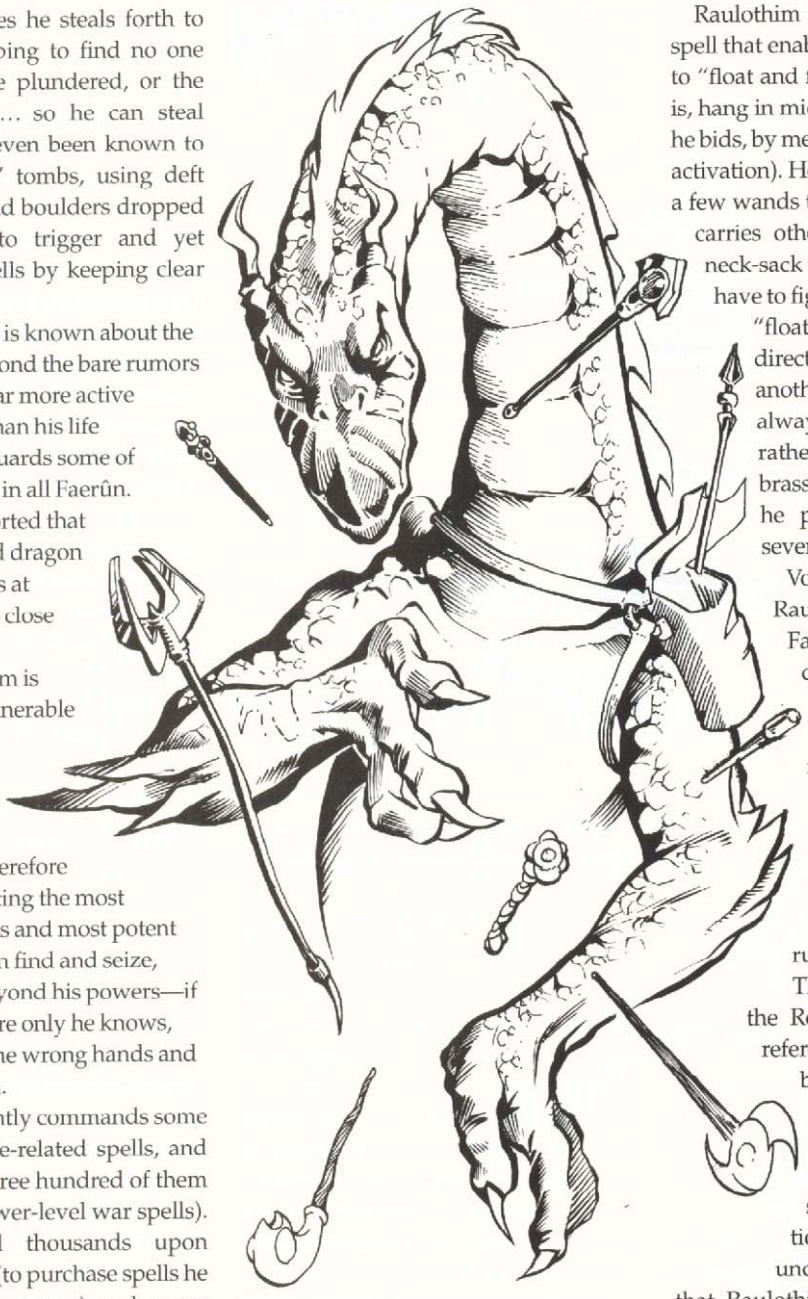
slay him. Sometimes he steals forth to mages' towers, hoping to find no one home, a ruin to be plundered, or the owner weakened ... so he can steal more magic. He's even been known to tear apart wizards' tombs, using deft lashes of his tail (and boulders dropped from high aloft) to trigger and yet avoid guardian spells by keeping clear of their ranges.

In Ruathym, little is known about the Wyrm of Axard beyond the bare rumors that his past was a far more active and colorful affair than his life today, and that he guards some of the mightiest magic in all Faerûn. It's also widely reported that the gigantic emerald dragon enjoys hurling spells at those who come too close to his island home.

In truth, Raulothim is terrified by how vulnerable his relatively puny magical skills leave him, in the face of all these deadly foes. He's therefore set about accumulating the most puissant battle spells and most potent magical items he can find and seize, including things beyond his powers—if they're hidden where only he knows, they can't fall into the wrong hands and be used against him.

Raulothim currently commands some four hundred battle-related spells, and he can use about three hundred of them (the most useful lower-level war spells). He's accumulated thousands upon thousands of coins (to purchase spells he can't gain any other way) and many magical items. Enchanted items useful in battle he keeps at hand; the others he buries with the coins (beneath tons of gravel at the bottom of the Pit, which rests atop an incredibly hard volcanic "plug" that effectively prevents anyone tunneling up into it from beneath without the Silent Shadow getting lots of warning of their slow, laborious progress), for possible later use trading for magic he desires.

Raulothim's collection of battleworthy magical items is known to include *rods of flailing, lordly might, smiting,* and *terror*; a *staff of power* and two *staves of thunder & lightning*; four *wands of fire*, three *wands of frost*, and at least one each of *wands of lightning, paralyzation*, and *polymorphing*, as well as a *javelin of lightning* a ring that can unleash one *dispel magic* and two *reverse gravity* spells per day, and several enchanted swords. Most of these are concealed at various "ready" locations around Axard, guarded against unauthorized use by guardian spells and by their being engraved with false command words that cause them to strike at (rather than obeying) the utterer.



Raulothim makes extensive use of a spell that enables him to animate wands to "float and fire" at his command (that is, hang in midair, aim, and discharge as he bids, by mental command or words of activation). He uses the *staff of power* and a few wands to so guard his lair, and he carries other wands with him in a neck-sack for use in any duel he may have to fight (usually setting them to "float and fire" at a foe from one direction, while he attacks from another). The Wyrm of Axard always wears the ring—or rather, always wears a plain brass ring; some sages believe he possesses, and alternates, several magical rings.

Volo's notes indicate that Raulothim has visited a Mage-Fair (in disguise). The dragon was fascinated by what he saw, terrified at being surrounded by so many folk who could destroy him with a few gestures, and reassured that not all mages in Faerûn were part of some vast conspiracy to rule the world together.

The sometime tour guide of the Realms also found written references to the Silent Shadow being seen overhead at a minor battle fought somewhere in the Dessarin valley in 1211 D.R. Elminster found no earlier mention of the wyrm, but he did uncover the surprising news that Raulothim has traded, down the years, with the Taerserr family of halflings in Holgerstead—exchanging large and detailed maps of his own making (scratched on great slabs of Axard rock) in return for items of minor magic (such as lanterns whose shuttered interiors hold stones on which *continual light* spells have been cast, *potions of healing*, and so on). By all accounts, the dragon is an exacting and thorough cartographer of the Sword Coast North; Blucklo Taerserr's recent "Drawn by a dragon!" claims were hardly necessary to sell the table-sized maps to lordlings, Waterdhavian nobles, and merchants wealthy

When they found their treasure-burying watched over by a silently attentive emerald dragon of monstrous size, some of the crew fled through a gate they opened into another plane.

enough to mount them on the walls of their feast halls—or upon actual tables.

Raulothim is also a collector of words of activation and magical command phrases (of which he has swift and excellent recall). He's currently engaged in using *crystal balls*, some having powers of *ESP* or *clairaudience*, to spy on active adventuring bands, trying to learn their true natures.

Raulothim believes he needs to find adventurers capable and formidable in both intrigue and combat, who above all will be loyal to him. He'll sponsor them (and if need be, aid them with magic and his own fighting abilities) as they carry out a task that is likely to consume their lives: exploring the gates Raulothim has heard about, finding and guarding any such portals near his lair, and devising some method of watching over all known gates for invasions by potentially deadly foes.

The Silent Shadow is aware that several adventuring bands will be necessary to replace the inevitable casualties of age and combat—and that for his own protection, it's best if he somehow keeps the bands from learning of each other (both to keep them from joining forces against him, and to prevent any mind-reading menace from learning of one group from captive members of another). Raulothim knows of several baelnorn who watch over gates near the sanctums they guard—and wonders if he can bargain with such beings to have them monitor a farscrying network of "gatewatch" magics.

He deems such a watch urgently necessary. His own fleeting and sporadic examinations of gates have shown the Wyrm of Axard heavily-armed creatures of many strange races furtively emerging from, and disappearing into, these portals to other worlds. Raulothim worries that Toril may already be a place of arms-storage and weapons-practice for "creatures from elsewhere," and that an unguarded Faerûn may someday, without warning, become a wasted battleground between warring forces from elsewhere ... someday all too soon.

The Silent Shadow's relations with other dragons have been, according to the dragon expert Velsaert of Baldur's Gate, "a series of avoidances, flights from even friendly overtures, and deadly defenses of his lair." Raulothim has never mated and shows no interest in doing so. His paranoia rules him as surely as a tyrant master, although he's willing to accept allies (such as the baelnorn) under clearly-defined conditions, and there seems no reason why a dragon could not be an ally. It should be noted that "allies" to Raulothim are beings who dwell at a safe distance and don't come calling unannounced.

Raulothim's Lair

The Silent Shadow dwells in a large, labyrinthine cave network opening off the ledge above the Pit of Stars where he likes to sprawl. These caverns bristle with traps. Most are *explosive runes* and similar spells, some placed on false spellbooks, and the lair also sports caverns not used by the dragon that feature falling-block traps to doom unwanted intruders.

Raulothim's lair is also defended by magically-animated automatons: creatures controlled by his various magical items. Reports of these servitors identify them as golems, gargoyles, or other flying creatures made of "living stone," as well as stationary menaces that resemble the stones of the landscape until approached too closely.

The Pit of Stars is the lone true lair of the Silent Shadow, but the emerald dragon has eight or more "sleeping perches" (high mountain ledges sheltered by overhangs, from which he often has to chase roosting perytons or even wyverns) on various islets up and down the northerly Sword Coast. At least one of these perches leads to a hidden cavern where the dragon caches magical items and spellbooks, in case his main lair should ever be despoiled or destroyed.

It should be noted that Raulothim duplicated many of his most important spells by means of a magical, animated quill pen (possibly of Netherese or Myth Drannan origin) that traced magical writings and then reproduced them exactly ... a pen that crumbled to dust

decades ago, when its magic was exhausted. He hopes, of course, to someday find another.

Raulothim is willing to allow mages to copy his spells for their personal use, so long as they also make "second" copies for him—or would be, if he could only find a way to trust sorcerers, or guard against what he sees as their inevitable betrayal. He has found mention of a "bloodfire" spell used by an elven mage in Myth Drannor who took on human apprentices and protected himself by means of this magic. The spell required the recipient to willingly accept the spell, which would remain quiescent for years, defying all attempts to remove it—until the caster, by a single act of will, either dismisses the spell without harm or causes the spell recipient's blood to boil and burst into flame, immolating him from within. According to the records Raulothim discovered, *bloodfire* was used twice against the mage's treacherous apprentices. The mage married a third apprentice—and one of their half-elven daughters disappeared with the spell after her parents died together in a chain reaction disaster of activated magical items that blasted them, and the top of the tall, slender stone tower they shared, to nothingness. Raulothim has been unable to find any trace of spell or daughter, one Maerithlee Ieirmitarym.

For obvious reasons, Elminster notes, many archmages would value this spell highly. "Reluctance to trust" is a condition afflicting most dragons and accomplished wizards; almost all of them would use this spell if they could gain access to it—and many are so tormented by their loneliness that they'd pay large sums to acquire a demonstrably-effective copy of *bloodfire* (thought to be an eighth- or ninth-level wizard spell). "Oh, that I could trust enough to love," the character of the wizard Golothmiir cries out at the climax of the famous play *Argonyar in Amn*—a scene that has moved many a mage to tears.

A heavily guarded lair passage leads to a cavern where the Silent Shadow is preparing to create a copy of himself ... if he can ever successfully modify a stolen copy of the *stasis clone* spell used by Manshoon of the Zhentarim (details of which appear in the Campaign Book of the *Ruins of Zhentil Keep* boxed set). To even begin to do so, Raulothim knows he'll need a *helm of supreme wizardry*, which allows use of spells beyond the normal abilities of a wearer. He's read about these helms in several diaries of humans who learned spellcraft in Myth Drannor but hasn't yet located one. Still, he can't believe they were all destroyed in the fall of that fair city. (Indeed, the very next wyrm we'll visit in these pages, Saryndalaghlothtor, owns such a helm.)

Raulothim's Domain

The Silent Shadow largely ignores the concept of a domain, though he defends the island of Axard as one. He considers himself free to roam all Toril if he deems it necessary, but is well aware of other dragons' territorial claims—and that it's best to escape their notice entirely by avoiding their domains.

Raulothim's Magic

Here are a pair of battle spells drawn from the Silent Shadow's ever-growing collection. The second spell is a modification of one known to be in use by human wizards in Neverwinter decades ago; several non-draconic variants of it may well be in circulation.

Forcebarb

(Evocation)
Level: 3
Range: 30 yards
Components: V
Duration: 3 rounds
Casting Time: 1
Area of Effect: 1 or 2 beings
Saving Throw: Special

This spell creates a glowing beam of light that tapers to a tail at the caster's end, and thickens into a sphere at the end farthest from him. This forcebarb is 10 feet long, cylindrical, has a 3'-diameter, and a "head" sphere six feet in diameter. It hangs stationary in the air and is easily avoided unless it forms so as to touch a target, fill an opening, or a target moves into it.

A *forcebarb* is unaffected by solid objects intervening in the place of its formation (so long as some open space is present; it must be an area seen by the caster during casting, not merely deduced, as in "whatever area is on the other side of that door").

The first two creatures coming into contact with a *forcebarb* must make two saving throws: one against paralyzation, and one against spell. If the save vs. paralyzation fails, the victim is stunned (reeling, unable to move or carry out any deliberate action) for 1 round; if it succeeds, the victim feels only a harmless tingling. If the save vs. spell fails, the victim suffers 1d12 hp electrical damage; if

the save is successful, only 1 point of damage is suffered.

After affecting two creatures (even beings the caster might not have intended to harm; the caster has no influence on the *forcebarb*, though he can't be affected by his own barb), a *forcebarb* winks out of existence. It also fades away harmlessly when the spell duration expires, regardless of how many creatures it has or hasn't affected. A creature can't be harmed twice by the same *forcebarb*, even if making two entirely separate contacts with it.

Forcebarb spells destroy *shield* spells in passing and are unaffected by them. If a *forcebarb* spell comes into contact with *dispel magic* effects or *minor globes of invulnerability*, the two magics mutually (and harmlessly, though the process may be visually spectacular) destroy each other. Fifth and higher level defensive magics negate *forcebarbs* at no cost to themselves.

Shimmermantle

(Abjuration)
Level: 4
Range: 0
Components: V
Duration: 1 turn/level
Casting Time: 1
Area of Effect: The caster
Saving Throw: None

This spell creates a shimmering aura that surrounds and moves with its caster. To affect the caster, an attacker must overcome the mantle, as follows: the hit point damage of any successful attack, physical or magical, is subtracted from the points possessed by the mantle. (Non-damaging magic is presumed to have 3 hit points per spell level.) If the mantle's protection is higher, the attack fails. If the attack deals more damage, the mantle fails (ending the spell instantly), and the attack takes its full normal effect.

A *shimmermantle* possesses 2 hit points per experience level of its caster, to a maximum of 22 points. It loses one point for every round in which it is tested by an attack, and can't regenerate lost points. *Magic missile* spells augment a *shimmermantle*, whether cast deliberately at it ("friendly fire") or as an attack; rather than harming the mantle, they add their normal damage, on a 1-for-1 basis, to the permanent total of the mantle, and don't count as a testing of the *shimmermantle* (i.e., don't cost it a hit point).

The caster of a *shimmermantle* can cast all spells and employ all magical items from within the mantle without their operation being hampered, with two exceptions: *magic missiles* are always absorbed by the mantle, even if they were intended to go forth and strike another being; and lightning magics are negated. A *shimmermantle* protects its caster from the effects of all lightning-related magic, from *lightning bolts* to simple electrical discharges, and is itself unaffected (neither harmed nor augmented) by such forces.

A *shimmermantle* can coexist with other defensive spells operating on the same caster, so long as they aren't spells that negate magic (such as *minor globe of invulnerability*).

A fifth-level variant of this spell, *improved shimmermantle*, can be made invisible (no shimmering aura), and can be cast on another, touched, being. It is otherwise identical in effects to shimmermantle. Neither form of the spell protects any creature possessing simultaneous existence on more than one plane of existence (such as certain undead).

Raulothim's Fate

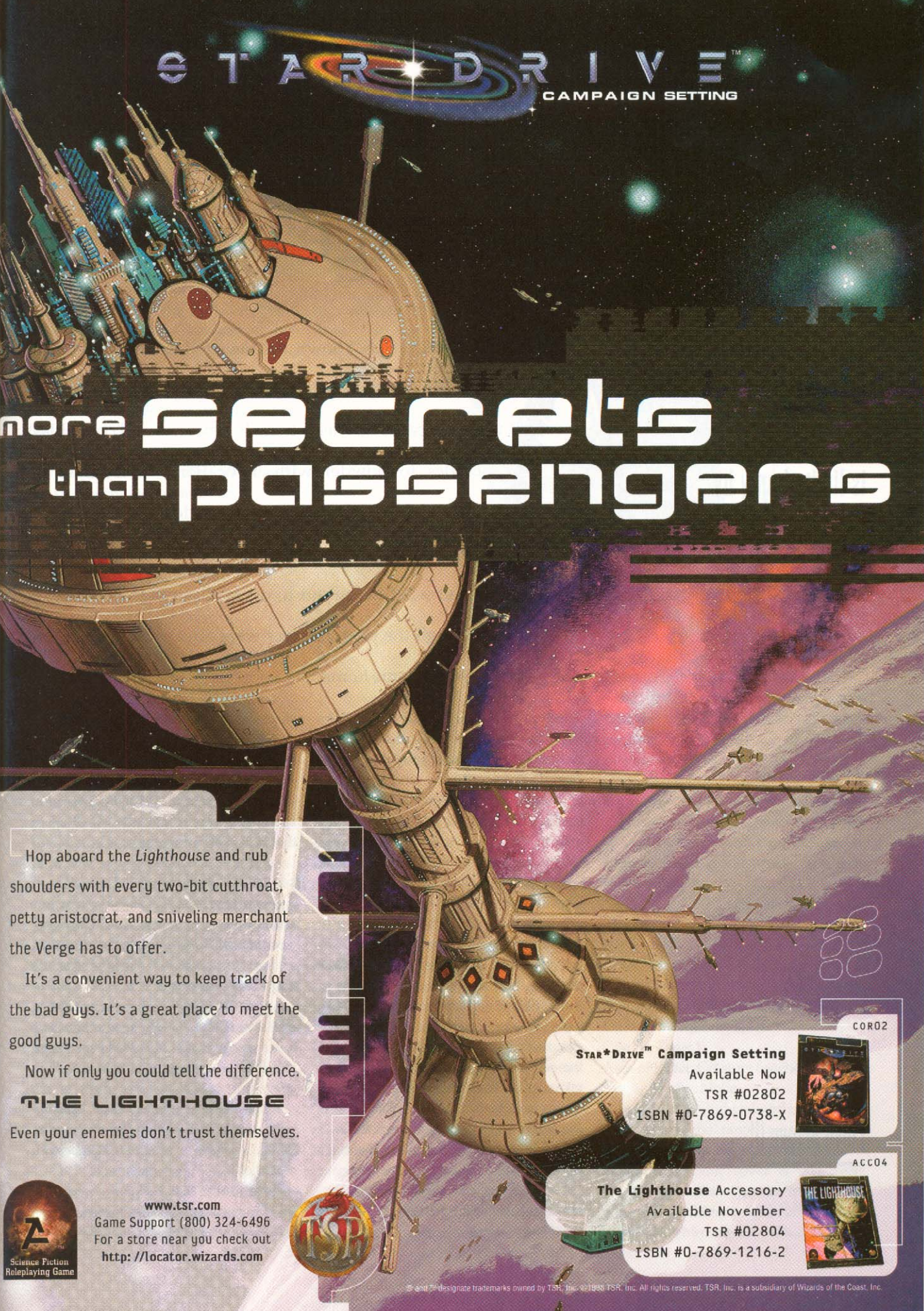
The Silent Shadow seems to be a waiting, sitting target—and this is deliberate: if adventuring bands and wizardly cabals come calling, they must do battle on his prepared ground. Most intruders notice the mound of gold coins and tumbled chests at the center of the Pit of Stars; a lure, of course. Raulothim dropped the treasure there because the Pit was once (before the last crumbling caldera walls fell away, leaving it open, as it is today) the lair of a powerful beholder. That eye tyrant is now an invisible doomsphere lurking deep in the Pit, awaiting intruders it can slay.

With the aid of his arsenal of magical items and such defenders as the doomsphere and his automatons, the Silent Shadow is known to have brought about the doom of twoscore formidable bands of attackers (including a dozen Zhentarim magelings who styled themselves the Robes of Doom, and the chartered adventuring companies of Bendever's Talons and The Bold Broadswords of Mirabar), as well as an unknown but large number of independent thieves.

Raulothim commands items that can levitate the remains of fallen intruders away from the doomsphere for his leisurely examination, plundering, and then tasteful arrangement around the Pit as lures and decoys. (A favorite is a chest containing an explosive trap or cursed magical items, surrounded by the bodies of fallen adventurers, which the Silent Shadow pretends to defend fiercely.)

Whether this dragon perishes under the attacks of treasure-seekers or the gate-hopping "overfoes" he so fears is anyone's guess, but if neither prevail over Raulothim in the next two decades, Elminster expects the emerald dragon to find magical means of creating a *stasis clone* or otherwise prolonging his existence (such as lichdom). Though the Old Mage seems to admire the Silent Shadow's striving, Mystra's desire to have magic abroad in Faerûn rather than hoarded keeps her Chosen busy spreading rumors and treasure maps that bid fair to keep the Wyrm of Axard battling treasure-seekers often, until the day Raulothim is no more.

Ed Greenwood is hard at work uncovering new mysteries of the Realms. So far, all he's managed to get out of Elminster is something about "in the conservatory, with a candlestick." He cautions those readers who have conservatories not to try anything involving Elminster; Chosen of Mystra are best left to the trained professionals. He urges those readers who are trained professionals to come out of hiding and contact him; whatever the Chosen might have done to them last time, they're needed now.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The Mage's Secret

Diviners know that what you can do is limited only by what you can learn.

by
Lloyd Brown III

illustrated by
John Stanko

ALAN DUNHILL was known as one of the most successful adventuring mages of the last hundred years. His success wasn't because he was extremely powerful and could blast castles to powder with invocations, or because he commanded vast armies of undead or fiends, or because of his protective enchantments. He was successful because he accomplished what he set out to do, without fail. The caravan always got through the pass, the orcs were always driven off, and the princess always came home.

Recently, some of Dunhill's spellbooks have been rediscovered, along with a startling secret: Dunhill was a diviner! The disclosure that a diviner was a famous adventurer instead of a bookish scholar has caused great controversy among those wizards who feel that a diviner's place is in the library.

Dunhill's books are a series of papyrus tomes, bound with dark gray-green sahuagin skin and normally kept in a thick metal chest. The pages themselves are yellowed and irregularly colored, making the brownish inks difficult or impossible to read in some places. They have few illustrations and almost no border: the writing extends all the way to the end of the page, so the reader must take care not to damage the text with frequent turning of the pages. The letters are large and consistently drawn in a readable block style, though in Dunhill's private script.

The first two of Dunhill's books contain most of the divination spells from the *Player's Handbook*, excepting *contact other plane*, *false vision*, and *screen*. These are mixed with a small but versatile selection of spells from the other schools, excepting only conjuration/summoning. The third contains a few of the divination spells that were Alan's own creations or that he copied from other books.

Standard Spells (Books I and II)

Level One: *Alarm, cantrip, charm person, chromatic orb*, comprehend languages, detect disease*, detect magic, detect undead, enlarge, fist of stone*, identify, Nystul's magic aura, read magic.*

Level Two: *Detect evil, detect invisibility, ESP, invisibility, knock, know alignment, locate object, magic mouth, mirror image, past life*, protection from cantrips, vocalize*, web.*

Level Three: *Clairaudience, clairvoyance, dispel magic, fireball, fly, hold person, infravision, item, phantom steed, spirit armor*.*

Level Four: *Detect scrying, enervation, fear, fire trap, locate creature*, magic mirror, polymorph other, stoneskin, wizard eye.*

Level Five: *Chaos, cloudkill, dismissal, feeblemind, Khazid's procurement*, Rary's telepathic bond*, shadow magic, summon shadow, transmute rock to mud.*

Level Six: *Contingency, enchant an item, geas, globe of invulnerability, legend lore, permanent illusion, reincarnation, shades, stone to flesh, true seeing.*

Level Seven: *Delayed blast fireball, phase door, sequester, simulacrum, teleport without error, vanish, vision.*

Level Eight: *Airboat*, clone, defoliate*, incendiary cloud, mind blank, Otto's irresistible dance, permanency, polymorph any object.*

Level Nine: *Elemental aura*, foresight, imprisonment, meteor swarm, succor, time stop, weird.*

* Note: these spells do not appear in the *Player's Handbook*. The DM should make substitutions as necessary.

New Spells (Book III)

Detect Mineral

(Divination)
Level: 1
Range: 60 yards
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1 round
Casting Time: 1
Area of Effect: Special
Saving Throw: None

This spell allows a wizard to search for a particular metal or mineral. It finds only raw, unworked metallic ore or minerals. Coins, therefore, are invisible to this spell, as are cut gems. *Detect mineral* finds whichever metallic ore or mineral is requested by the caster, or the largest source if more than one are within range. The caster knows the direction and range (to within 5 feet) of the material requested. Only one mineral can be searched for with each casting. The value of the item also limits which ores or minerals can be detected, as indicated on the following table.

The material component is any item made from the requested metal or mineral.

Caster Level	Metal Value	Gem Value
1	Base (lead, tin)	Base (crystals, limestone)
2	Copper	Ornamental
3	Silver	Semi-precious
5	Gold	Fancy
7	Platinum	Precious
9	Mithral	Gems
12	Adamantite	Jewels

Know Intelligence

(Divination)
Level: 1
Range: 60 yards
Components: V, S
Duration: 1 round/level
Casting Time: 5
Area of Effect: 1 target per round
Saving Throw: Negate

This spell can be used up to once per round to determine the Intelligence of a target creature or intelligent magical item. If the target fails to make a saving throw vs. spell, the caster knows the target's approximate Intelligence, given as a *Monstrous Manual*™ tome rating (low, average, very, and so on). If the saving throw is not known, allow the same chance as a 12th-level wizard. While this divination does not necessarily reveal another wizard, it can show who is definitely intelligent enough to cast certain spells. It may also help the caster penetrate a disguise. A genius orc, for example, might suggest illusion or alteration magic is at work, as orcs are not renowned for their intellectual prowess. If the target has god-like intelligence and the caster does not, the caster must make a saving throw vs. paralysis or be stunned (reeling and unable to attack) for 1d4 rounds.

Serpentine Sight

(Divination)
Level: 1
Range: Touch
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 2 rounds/level
Casting Time: 1
Area of Effect: Creature touched
Saving Throw: None

By bending light slightly, *serpentine sight* allows the target to see around obstacles within his sight. The concealing effect of soft cover is effectively halved. A hidden attacker in the trees who is considered 90% covered by leaves finds himself only 45% concealed.

This does not negate the cover's protection against missile weapons, but anyone hiding and observing the party would be able to be identified at normal visual ranges. It has no effect on any form of magical *invisibility*, nor any effect on concealment not dependent on obstacles to vision (such as hiding in shadows, *darkness* spells, and the like).

The material component is an eye from any creature with eyestalks (crab, beholder, and so on).

Envision Whole

(Divination)
Level: 2
Range: Touch
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1 round
Casting Time: 3
Area of Effect: One object
Saving Throw: None

By handling a fragment of an object (a piece of pottery, an arrow head, a piece of armor plate), the caster can see a vision of the item as it appeared in its entirety. "Item" here is determined by purpose and must have been made; natural objects are not made and cannot be visually reconstructed by this spell. Thus, a splinter of wood might be seen as a staff but never as a part of a tree. An item that is a whole, useful object by itself reveals no information to the caster.

The material component needed is a miniature jigsaw puzzle of 6–10 pieces that is assembled during the casting. The puzzle disappears when completed.

Insight

(Divination, Alteration)
Level: 2
Range: Touch
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1 hour/level
Casting Time: 1 turn
Area of Effect: Person touched
Saving Throw: None

Insight is a direct analog of the more common *strength* spell. It adds 1d8 to the Intelligence of a wizard, 1d6 to a priest or thief, and 1d4 to a warrior, subject to a maximum of 20 in any case. Similarly to *strength*, these additions are subject to the restrictions due to race (no class places a maximum on Intelligence). *Insight* is useful for disbelieving illusions, improving proficiencies based on Intelligence, or possibly solving riddles. It can be used for the wizard's check to learn spells, but the player and DM should record the actual dice roll used in the check. If the roll indicates success, but the score is higher than the score normally needed by the character according to his actual Intelligence, the spell is forgotten when the *insight* spell expires. Raising Intelligence back again does not bring the spell back to memory. Monsters without a specific Intelligence number find that their category has been temporarily raised to the next highest (low becomes average, and so on).

The material component of this spell is a hair (or scale, or tentacle) from a creature of genius-level Intelligence—a mind flayer or a brownie, for example.

Time Sense

(Divination)
Level: 2
Range: 30 yards
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1 round/level + 2d4 rounds
Casting Time: 2
Area of Effect: 1 creature
Saving Throw: None

Time sense allows a creature with at least low Intelligence to keep a perfect record of time, knowing the exact time within a fraction of a second and keeping track of multiple events happening at once. When avoiding regular, predictable events like the swing of a giant pendulum or other similar time-dependent mechanical traps, the creature gains a +2 bonus to any saves allowed. When in combat and concentrating on avoiding blows (that is, not casting a spell or running at full speed), the target gains a –1 AC bonus, in addition to any gained for parrying, as he knows how long it takes a given blow to reach him. If the recipient of the spell is any one other than the caster, the duration is only half normal.

The material component is a small timepiece of precious metals and ornamental stones. It must be worth at least 300 gp, and it must save vs. crushing blow to survive the casting. If it fails, it shatters instantly, though the spell is otherwise resolved normally. As long as it makes the save, it can be reused.

Forecast Usefulness

(Divination)
Level: 3
Range: 0
Components: V, S
Duration: 8 hours
Casting Time: 1 round
Area of Effect: The caster
Saving Throw: None

When cast before memorizing spells, this divination helps the caster realize which spells may be less than ideal for his purposes. After *forecast usefulness* is cast, the wizard writes down which spells he memorizes and in which order. The DM checks each spell against what encounters he expects the party to meet for that day. If the spell is one that is likely to be unused, there is a 20% chance that the wizard realizes its uselessness halfway through memorization (that is, after five minutes per spell level) and can drop the spell in favor of another one the same level.

Many spells are versatile enough that they are never revealed as useless, especially defensive spells. If the DM has just a perilous mountain climb planned, then spells like *water breathing*, *globe of invulnerability*, and *know alignment* might be revealed as unnecessary. Higher level wizards benefit by having more chances to check for usefulness. A clever wizard might try to determine what events or situations can be expected, but he should be careful. If *magic missile*, *stinking cloud*, and *fireball* are supposedly useless, it could mean that no combat is expected, or that the party is about to be whisked away to a plane where evocations don't work!

This effect applies only to wizard spells. Priestly spellcasters must use their wisdom and divine guidance to determine the usefulness of their priest spells.

Know Command Word

(Divination)
Level: 3
Range: Touch
Components: V, S
Duration: Instantaneous
Casting Time: 3
Area of Effect: 1 magical item
Saving Throw: None

A more powerful and specific version of the first-level *identify* spell, his spell is

available only to diviner specialist wizards. *Know command word* gives the diviner a 10% chance per level of determining the proper command word for a magical item. If successful, the word appear immediately in the diviner's mind. If the spell is unsuccessful, the diviner receives either nothing (50% chance) or false command words (50% chance) that are quickly recognized as such when they fail to evoke the magic of the item.

Locate Wizard Mark

(Divination)
Level: 3
Range: Unlimited
Components: V, S, M
Duration: Special
Casting Time: Special
Area of Effect: 1 *wizard-marked* item
Saving Throw: None

Locate wizard mark allows a caster to trace his or her own *wizard mark* from any range on the same plane. It is an ideal spell for recovering stolen property, but it can also be used to find the wizard's way home, trail a suspected spy, or follow an individual who willingly bears a *wizard mark*.

The spell's range extends 50 yards per round of casting time. Thus, if the item in question were three miles away, the caster would learn its direction on the 106th round of casting. After the initial casting, the spell requires a simple phrase repeated twice every round. The caster can keep track of how many rounds the phrase is repeated to find the range to the *wizard mark*. Maintaining the spell is no more taxing than light conversation, so the duration (and therefore range) is limited only by the caster's stamina. A wizard can maintain the casting for one hour per point of Constitution and must make a successful Constitution check each hour thereafter to maintain the spell. Any magics that block scrying also prevent the operation of this spell.

At 12th level, the caster can trace his own mark to another plane from the point it left the plane the caster is currently on. From there, he loses the *wizard mark* and must travel to the other plane to learn more. Also at 12th level, the caster can trace the mark of another wizard if it is known, but only on the same plane. At 15th level, the mark of a different wizard can be traced to another plane.

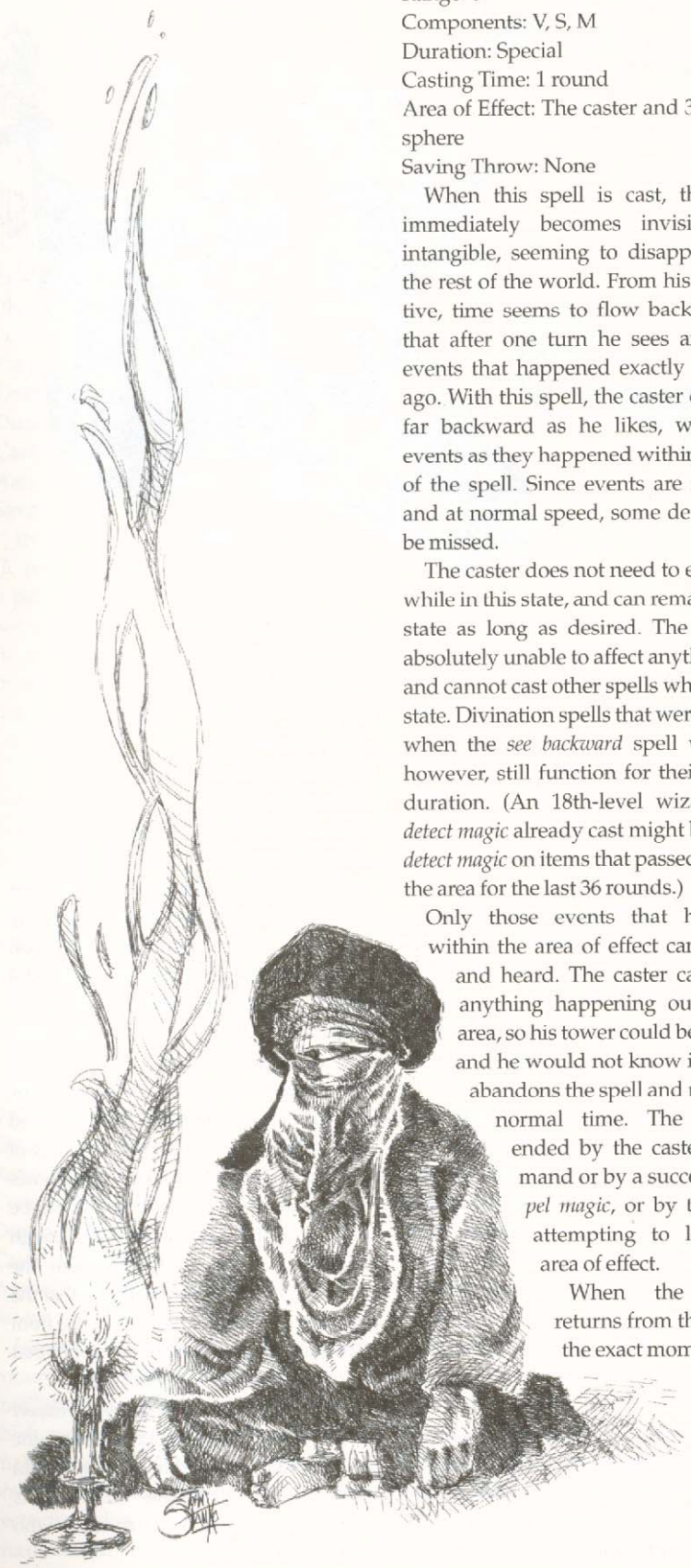
The material component is 500 gp worth of the pigments and diamond dust used in creating the *wizard mark*, in addition to the material components of the *wizard mark* spell.

Teleport Track

(Divination) Reversible
Level: 4
Range: 0
Components: V
Duration: Instantaneous
Casting Time: 4
Area of Effect: 20-yard radius
Saving Throw: None

Teleport track determines the destination of a creature or item teleporting within 20 yards of the caster. This spell reveals the destination of any successful *teleport* that occurred within 1 round/level of the caster. If the caster then decides to *teleport* to that place, immediately or within 1 round per level, the place is considered at least "viewed once" when determining the accuracy of the *teleport* spell. This information comes to the caster as a sort of code that can be used to *teleport*, but it gives only a rough estimate of distance and direction. The caster might know, for example, that the priestess who just appeared came from 20 miles behind enemy lines but not that she came from the temple of Set.

Teleport trace is the reverse of *teleport track*. It enables the caster to determine the location of a creature or item that teleports away from his vicinity. It is often used to deal with enemies who have *teleported* away.



See Backward

(Divination)
Level: 5
Range: 0
Components: V, S, M
Duration: Special
Casting Time: 1 round
Area of Effect: The caster and 30' radius sphere
Saving Throw: None

When this spell is cast, the caster immediately becomes invisible and intangible, seeming to disappear from the rest of the world. From his perspective, time seems to flow backward, so that after one turn he sees and hears events that happened exactly one turn ago. With this spell, the caster can go as far backward as he likes, witnessing events as they happened within the area of the spell. Since events are reversed, and at normal speed, some details may be missed.

The caster does not need to eat or rest while in this state, and can remain in this state as long as desired. The caster is absolutely unable to affect anything seen and cannot cast other spells while in this state. Divination spells that were in effect when the *see backward* spell was cast, however, still function for their normal duration. (An 18th-level wizard with *detect magic* already cast might be able to *detect magic* on items that passed through the area for the last 36 rounds.)

Only those events that happened within the area of effect can be seen and heard. The caster cannot see anything happening outside the area, so his tower could be invaded and he would not know it until he abandons the spell and returns to normal time. The spell is ended by the caster's command or by a successful *dispel magic*, or by the caster attempting to leave the area of effect.

When the wizard returns from the past, at the exact moment of his "departure," he is disoriented (stunned) for 1 round per hour spent there. The caster is unable to cast spells and has the normal penalties associated with being stunned (reeling and unable to attack; if attacked, he suffers a –4 on all ability checks and saving throws).

The material component is a scale, a hair or a bit of bone from any creature over 100 years old.

Clairsentience

(Divination)
Level: 6
Range: Special
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1 turn
Casting Time: 6
Area of Effect: 30' radius sphere
Saving Throw: None

This spell is a combination of *clairaudience* and *clairvoyance*. It also allows the caster to detect odors from a distance, as well as temperature (infravision). If the caster already possesses infravision, it is not enhanced by this spell. The spell can be foiled in the same way as *clairaudience* and *clairvoyance*. Like those spells, it can be cast on any location the caster knows or sees.

The material component is a pineal gland from a psionic creature.

Reverse Scrying

(Divination)
Level: 6
Range: 0
Components: V, S, M
Duration: Special
Casting Time: 6
Area of Effect: 10-yard radius
Saving Throw: Special

This spell is usually cast when the caster begins an undertaking for which he desires secrecy. It might also follow the detection of scrying by another divination spell. *Reverse scrying* finds the source of the magical watcher and gives the caster a mental image of who is watching him (which lasts for one round per caster level), allowing the caster to determine knowledge based on a visual appraisal, such as clothing, race, sex, size, and identity, if the watcher is known to the caster. The watcher may continue to watch, as this divination

spell can do nothing on its own to stop the scrying. The caster may therefore miss the name of the person scrying him but learn that it is a half-elven bard. The watcher has a 5% chance per level each round of realizing that the scrying has been reversed. Breaking the original scrying ends the *reverse scrying* instantly.

The material components are a silver mirror and some mercury.

Speak with Water

(Divination)
Level: 6
Range: 5 yards/level
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1 question/3 levels, 1 turn maximum
Casting Time: 3 rounds
Area of Effect: 10' cube of water
Saving Throw: None

By casting *speak with water,* a wizard can ask questions of a natural body of water such as a lake, ocean, or pond. Even though the water within the body may be moving, treat the area itself as the target of the spell, and consider it to have knowledge of the area as if it were always there. The water might tell the caster who or what has passed through it, where the nearest bridge or ford is, or whether a certain item is hidden inside of it. This spell has no effect on water-based elementals or other such creatures.

The water's voice varies in pitch with its size and movement. Waterfalls bellow in deafening shouts, shallow brooks babble merrily, and an ocean's tones are so deep that it is difficult to understand. If the campaign features spirits who live in these bodies of water, the spell might call on those spirits, at the DM's option.

The material component is a pinch of salt dissolved in wine.

Candle of Revelation

(Divination)
Level: 7
Range: 10 yards
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 8 hours
Casting Time: 7
Area of Effect: 1 candle
Saving Throw: Special

This spell uses a common candle as a focus. While the candle is lit, the entire area illuminated is subject to *detect invisibility, detect magic,* and *know alignment,* and only the *know alignment* is subject to a saving throw. Creatures from a plane other than the plane on which the spell is cast are revealed, as are any creatures not in their native shape. Once lit, the candle cannot be moved. It is, therefore, most often placed where it can benefit guards who do not possess these abilities.

The material component is a candle made from a special wax and a combination of spices worth no less than 300 gp. Optionally, the DM could specify the materials needed and require the caster to gather them personally.

Well of Wisdom

(Divination)
Level: 7
Range: 0
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 3d6 rounds
Casting Time: 1 round
Area of Effect: The caster
Saving Throw: None

Well of wisdom grants the caster a temporary Wisdom score of 22. His mind is suddenly flooded with insight, and he learns how to draw upon his experience for maximum benefit. The ability increase affects immunity to certain spells, problem solving ability, and Wisdom-based proficiencies. The DM secretly rolls the spell's duration. *Well of wisdom* is one of the few divination spells that provides defensive benefits to the caster, since the high Wisdom can make him highly resistant to many Enchantment/Charm spells.

The material component is a cup of water from either the River Lethe or Cocytus.

Speak With Distant Dead

(Divination, Necromancy)
Level: 8
Range: 10 yards
Components: V, S, M
Duration: Special
Casting Time: 3 turns
Area of Effect: 1 creature
Saving Throw: Neg.

Like *speak with dead,* this spell enables the caster to ask questions of a dead creature. The chance of success is based on the conditions under which the spell is cast.

- Caster knows and was friendly with the deceased .....+15%
- Relative of the deceased is present .....+20%
- Possession of the deceased is present .....+10%
- Spell is cast in the place where the deceased lived .....+15%
- Spell is cast in the place where the deceased died .....+25%

To determine success, add all appropriate modifiers and roll percentile dice. Failure means that the dead spirit has not been found. Success means that the spirit's attention is focused on the caster, and the wizard can ask questions normally. The number of questions that can be asked and time of questioning is determined by the caster's level, as given in the above table.

Table 1: Speak With Distant Dead

Caster Level	Max. Time Dead	Max. Time Questioned	Max. # Questions
16th	10 years	2 turns	5
20th	100 years	3 turns	6
24th	1,000 years	1 hour	7

Lloyd Brown III caught up with the editorial staff at this year's GEN CON® Game Fair, but we saw him coming and called security in plenty of time. Fortunately, his typing hands weren't injured in the ensuing struggle, and we expect more articles from him soon.

The Third Time's a Charm

The delicate lace doily bothered Ragnar the Ruthless. "Sissy stuff," grumbled the great warrior to his cohorts.

by
Eric A. Jackson
& Emilia Agrafojo

illustrated by
Jim Crabtree

THEY LEFT THEIR WEAPONS ON THE LACY TABLES of "The Charm's" cloak room. Secretly, the small, frail objects reminded Ragnar of his mother, and her unchosen and unsent birthday present.

He entered with the others into the next room. It smelled a little like the Tomb of Anon-Totep. A rush of air quickly washed that scent away, replacing it with the perfumes of lavender and beeswax. The barbarian tensed as much at the sudden change in smells as at the environment. Glass bottles, delicate jewelry in fine wooden cases, crystal vases, and billowing silk froze the warrior with a fear unknown in dank caverns and sorcerous towers. Bumpkin-like, he huffled like a child waiting for his mother to pick just the right melon on market day, arms folded and face sour.

In contrast, the merchant appeared in splendid spirits. Offering wine or unfermented berry juice with a velvet gloved hand, he turned his beaming smile on each of the party.

"Welcome," he spoke as he poured, "to The Third Time's a Charm, a consignment shop for those of discriminating taste. I am Artisian Bonfondue." A glance, steady and calculating, assessed them all in an instant. "I know just what you need," Artisian continued. "Trust me."

Gabriella's Cameo of Countenances

This elegant brooch, set in silver with mother-of-pearl inlays, can show the profile of any person. To activate the cameo's power, the wearer need only speak the target's name aloud. The cameo's profile then alters to depict the visage of the target, identifying anyone from the most reclusive of eccentrics to the most famous of personalities. No former knowledge of the target's appearance is necessary, thus making it possible to locate and recognize the target while incognito.

The cameo's power is limited by a few provisos:

- The individual in question must be a living humanoid (no divine entities, animals, undead, etc.).
- That humanoid must be referred to by his or her true name.
- If the person in question is in disguise (physical or magical), the cameo still shows that person's true profile.

Distance from the target is immaterial as long as the target remains on the same plane as the wearer of the cameo. Targets of the cameo protected by innate powers or items that prevent location, such as an *amulet of proof against detection and location* may receive a saving throw vs. spell at the DM's discretion.

When the cameo is not worn, the figure's silhouette reverts to the profile of Gabriella Van der Michal, who commissioned its fashioning. While being

worn, but not in use, the profile is of its wearer, and though it can be worn discreetly, it cannot be disguised by any magical or non-magical means. The cameo can be activated by any humanoid twice a day and holds a profile for up to two hours or until its bearer speaks another name.

XP Value: 1,000 **GP Value:** 2,500

The Locket of the Grandmother

A rather remarkable piece, usually passed from parent to child, the *locket of the grandmother* allows the wearer to remain in daily contact with a beloved family member who has passed on. A tiny, detailed portrait of the deceased should be placed in the locket, replacing any portrait previously inside. Only one relative can be contacted by any wearer, and removal of the portrait breaks the magical bond forever. To use the locket, one must hold it in the left hand and envision the deceased's image. Activation of the locket's abilities greatly resembles the third-level priest spell *speak with dead*, as if cast by a 20th-level priest. Unlike *speak with dead*, however, the dead relative receives no saving throw vs. spell and is not limited to answering six questions. Within the three-round duration of the locket's influence, the wearer and the deceased can hold a normal conversation, although only the locket's wearer can hear the voice of the summoned. The *locket of the grandmother* can be activated once per week.

XP Value: 2,000 **GP Value:** 6,000

Eve's Bestiary Bracelet

This item consists of a thick gold chain from which dangle eight tiny charms. Several of which appear to be missing. The charms are remarkably lifelike renditions of eight animals carved from fine precious and semi-precious stones. When plucked from the bracelet, each charm makes the sound of the animal. Within one round, someone must place the torn charm in the palm of his or her left hand. It then confers its mystical gift upon the wearer (see below). Should this procedure not be followed, the charm explodes, causing 2d6 hp damage to all within a 5'-radius area.

Each charm disappears after its use. The bracelet vanishes when all charms have been removed from it.

The **Ruby Ant** allows the user to lift objects many times his or her own weight. For one turn, the recipient receives a +5 modifier to his/her Strength, for the purposes of lifting only. Use of this item moves the character's alignment along the Law/Chaos axis one degree toward Law. Thus, a Chaotic Good character becomes Neutral Good, and a True Neutral character becomes Lawful Neutral.

The **Tiger's Eye Hawk** gives a +4 to hit bonus to missile attacks launched by the user. This effect lasts for 1 turn, and is increased to +5 to hit if the target is flying. The character gains a permanent +1 to missile attacks, but also suffers from extreme claustrophobia, making dungeon adventuring difficult (all saving throws, and proficiency checks are made at a –2 penalty) and even sleeping indoors uncomfortable.

The **Sapphire Mackerel** grants the ability to swim, under or across a single body of water, without tiring or surfacing for air. The user swims from coast to coast in one quarter the time it would normally take to walk across an equal distance. All of the character's actions underwater take place as if under the influence of a *haste* spell and as if wearing a *ring of free action*. Additionally the character behaves as if under the influence of a *quest* spell, seeking to complete the swim in minimal time. After resurfacing, the character retains the ability to swim (gains the swimming proficiency) but is easily dehydrated

(must consume twice the normal amount of water each day).

The **Onyx Bull** provides the user with a great feast, including enough roasted meat to feed 30 people for three days. Anyone partaking of the feast receives healing as from a *cure serious wounds*. The charm marks its user, as small nubs of horns sprout from the character's head, causing a –2 penalty to Charisma among all those to whom horns are a disturbing sign. This disfigurement is offset by the benefits of a bull's tough hide. Although physically unchanged, the character gains a permanent magical –1 bonus to armor class.

The **Tourmaline Chameleon** allows the user to permanently change his or her physical form from one humanoid race to another, or to switch sexes within the same race. All ability scores remain the same unless they violate racial limits. Should the character fail to mentally identify their desired race or sex, one is chosen randomly. Roll 1d6. A roll of 1–3 results in a change of sex; a roll of 4–6 results in a change of race.

Roll 1d12	Race
1	Halfling
2	Dwarf
3	High elf
4	Drow elf
5	Merfolk
6	Human
7	Centaur
8	Gnome
9	Ogre
10	Orc
11–12	DM's choice

Note: The character must change. Reroll if the result indicates the character's own race.

The **Garnet Fox** allows the user to evade capture and detection. The user may become invisible at will for a 24-hour period. Additionally, the user gains protection from detection as if he or she were wearing an *amulet of proof against detection and location* for the same time period. On the following day, the charm grants the user a lifelong +5% chance to detect traps, transforms his or her hair to a blazing red, and changes his or her eye color to brilliant yellow.

The **Opal Gull** grants the user the ability to *control weather* temporarily. Whether becalming stormy seas, creating a fog, or bringing about a tornado, the weather comes up quickly (1d8 rounds) and lasts for 1d3 turns. Once the choice of weather is made, it cannot be controlled or stopped by the caster. In addition, the charm confers the non-weapon proficiencies of weather sense and seamanship upon the user. However, the user is permanently crowned with a head of white gull's feathers instead of hair.

The **Jade Cat** allows the recipient to enjoy perfect night vision for the span of one night, granting a +4 bonus to Dexterity and a +30% to move silently and hide in shadow abilities. A continuous, modified *feather fall* allows the user to jump from any height yet always land safely. This final power is permanent, but it brings with it a +2 reaction penalty from all canine creatures.

XP Value: 8,000 **GP Value:** 25,000

Doublet of the Doppleganger

Debonair and flashy, the *doublet of the doppleganger* sports slashed sleeves with multi-colored material, ribbons, and inset jewels set against a deep maroon leather vest stamped with complex spiraling patterns piped in silver. An item of cunning cut and powerful magicks, the *doublet* allows one user once per week to create a "double" of himself or herself. (Though the cut is for a man, a woman may wear it.)

Somewhere between a *simulacrum* and a *clone*, the "double" can perform simple tasks such as walking, waving, delivering a package, and even signing a contract (maximum of three words written), but the creation cannot speak or fight.

Like a loyal servant, the "double" obeys the creator's wishes but may improvise within its limitations. For example, if the double is instructed to walk along a certain street, it avoids barriers and obstacles instead of trying to go over or through them. Furthermore, the double cannot have additional spells cast upon it by the wearer and it is effectively 100% magic resistant.

The double always initially appears at the side of the creator. A perfect flesh and blood copy (all statistics are the same) the double can only retain one non-weapon proficiency and perfunctory knowledge of its creator (DM's discretion). The double is created fully clothed, modeling the *doublet* and whatever other clothes the character is wearing at the time of creation. All items created for the double look identical to the creator's equipment, but they are non-magical and vanish with the double. The creator may then remove the *doublet*, but the clone must always wear the "doubled" *doublet* to remain in existence.

Should the double be injured or destroyed during its 1d3 turns of existence, the double's creator suffers one-quarter of the damage suffered by the double unless a save vs death magic is made at –3. A successful save results in no damage to the creator. Furthermore, if the double is slain outright, the *doublet* itself must make a save vs. death magic at –3 or fall into ash.

XP Value: 5,000 **GP Value:** 15,000

Trousers of Timely Change

Rumor has it that Jordano the Mage fashioned 501 pairs of these trousers and released them throughout the multiverse as charitable gifts. Whenever the wearer has need of money for a kind or unselfish act, the money appears in the pocket of the pants. Only a few coins can appear for any one event—always the bare minimum for the good deed the character wishes to perform.

For example, the character wishes to save the city from an impending attack. The pants cannot produce enough money to buy a magical sword, hire an army, or bribe even a single town council member to the cause, but they can produce a handsome tip for the young woman at the bar who might just happen to know a secret way into the mayor's bedchamber, or it might produce even fewer coins to tip the old beggar outside the palace who is secretly a courtier spying for the king. In short, the money provided can cause only a subtle nudge to fate, not a crushing blow.

Alas, Jordano was an artist and ill suited for the life of a celebrity mage. As his fame and fashion sense spread, his message of morality was lost in constant requests for designer originals such as the *bodice of holding* and the *codpiece of illusion*. Embittered with the world, Jordano began manufacturing several less-than-helpful items before disappearing into the dustbowl of the once famous.

From this "blue period" came the *trousers of untimely change*. Believing that too many rich people were benefiting from his creations, Jordano manufactured a cursed version of his "original" trousers. These "cheap knock-offs" function normally until they are within the presence of any rogue character (not including the wearer). The pants then emit an audible sound of a number of large solid coins clinking together. The chinking becomes incredibly loud if the character is in mortal danger due to the magic of the trousers.

Trousers of Timely Change

XP Value: 3,000 **GP Value:** 8,000

Trousers of Untimely Change

XP Value: Nil **GP Value:** 4,000

Mama's Hankie

This 9" × 9" cloth, embroidered with the initials "M.T.," was once the private handkerchief of some late domestic wizard. The item is activated by dabbing one of the corners into water or a substance which is mostly water (i.e., spittle will do the job, as will soda water). Once the hankie is wet, one must dab the corner on the subject to effect a *remove curse* as cast by an 8th-level mage. Should the corner be dabbed in holy water, the effective level of the *remove curse* elevates to 12th level. Once used four times (all four corners), the handkerchief must be washed, dried, and carefully pressed, as it is made of a delicate fabric (saves as normal silk). Once this procedure is performed, the item may be used again.

XP Value: 2,000 **GP Value:** 7,500

Mama's Purse

An unusually well tailored *bag of holding*, *Mama's purse* is constantly rotating between several different dimensional storage spaces. Thus the *purse* can hold up to 500 cubic feet of items weighing 3,000 lbs or less and weighs a maximum of 15 lbs.

However, the constant rotation of the dimensional spaces makes getting what one wants time consuming. Characters must rummage through the *purse* for 1 full round to obtain a 10% chance of finding the desired item. The *purse* is filled with clutter from hundreds of owners and the item drawn (should the first attempt fail) should be some random item of no more than 1 gp in value (for example: a couple of copper coins, a bit of soda bread, a rolling pin, etc.). For each continual round of searching the character gains an additional 10 percent per round; thus, it never takes more than 10 rounds to find something placed in the *purse* by a holder. On the other hand, small items of under 1 gp value have a 5% chance per day of being permanently lost in the clutter.

XP Value: 3,000 **GP Value:** 6,500

Irene's Mystical Ballgown

Beautiful in black with shimmering sequins, this mystical gown of legend is somehow always in style. The *ballgown*, when not worn, appears upon a mannequin of its own manufacture, a large faceless doll of black satin. It is in this form that the *ballgown* performs its primary function as a dance instructor of exceptional quality. Within a short period of time (2d12 – Dex hours), any person willing to put in the maximal hours of practice (Max. hours/day = constitution score – 1) can gain the dance proficiency.

Donning the *ballgown*—a feat that any character with or without the dance proficiency can perform—causes a transformation of the both the dress and the wearer. Cut and style of the *ballgown* can be altered at will by the wearer, but its color always remains a shimmering black. To invoke the full powers of the *ballgown*, the wearer is required to make a successful dance proficiency check. The wearer then becomes more dextrous, lithe, and elegant, gaining +1 to Dexterity rolls, +2 to dance checks, and +1 to Charisma checks.

The dark weave of the *ballgown* goes beyond covering the body; the mind of the wearer may also be shrouded. Each hour the *gown* is fully activated, the character must save vs. spells or be unable to remove the dress or resist its mental effects. Failing the save causes the character to act impulsively, selfishly, and hedonistically. In addition, a failed save results in an addiction to dance, causing a preference to prance and caper even in life threatening situations as well as a permanent alignment shift to chaotic neutral. A *remove curse* spell removes the *gown* and negates its physical benefits, but not the mental afflictions or imposed alignment. Meditation, sacrifice, prayer, or other orderly atonements set out by the DM are the only paths back to salvation.

XP Value: 6,000 **GP Value:** 24,000

Fan of Sweet Airs

First found in the estate of the famed healer Lady Sabine of Bordon, this fan has been the savior of hamlets, towns, cities, and entire cultures for over 700 years. The breeze from this mystical fan (2' range) acts as a *cure disease* spell for one disease of the user's choosing. The wielder may cure any number of creatures afflicted until the eradication of the disease in a 100 mile radius. During this time, the wielder gains total immunity to this disease.

The fan must be "recharged" to cure a different disease. Of the two ways in which the fan's power can be accessed, the Path of Meditation is longer but less dangerous. A single cleric of name level (9th-level) or higher must spend an entire year meditating and performing a series of complex rituals to recharge the item. More dangerous is the Path of Self Sacrifice, in which the wielder may pledge his own life for the lives of the plague victims. For each hour after the pledge is made, the wielder permanently loses 1% of his resurrection survival score. At the end of the plague (5d20 hours later, or at the DM's discretion), the character must make a resurrection survival roll or perish permanently with no chance of resurrection or reincarnation, his total life energy given in the healing of the sick. Should the wielder survive, he falls unconscious automatically and remains so for 1d6 days (no saving throw applicable).

XP Value: 10,000 **GP Value:** 50,000

Shawl of Aging

The elderly are always underestimated. Whether the general concept of the elderly as non-threatening is due to reverence of the wizened or the appearance of fragility matters little, the advantage is the same. A *shawl of aging* is an item that creates an illusion about the wearer exactly replicating how the character would look as an elderly person of his or her race, without imposing any of the possible physical or mental infirmities that accompanies extreme old age. Unlike the illusion spell *alter self*, this disguise is foiled only by *true seeing*.

Several cursed versions of this item also exist, possibly created when elderly impostors were discovered by spell casters. The resulting items cause the wearer to actually age to an elderly state (90% of racial maximal lifespan). With loss comes wisdom, however, as the character gains +3 to Wisdom and may add any two appropriate non-weapon proficiencies. Note: The effects of the cursed shawl can only be experienced once by each individual wearer. These effects can only be reversed by a *limited wish* or a *wish* spell.

Shawl of Aging

XP Value: 3,500 **GP Value:** 9,000

Cursed Shawl of Aging

XP Value: Nil **GP Value:** 4,000

Cane of Safe Passage

Designed for the wizard Belipon the Elder, this cane of gnarled oak is topped with a simple iron ball. The great wizard's apprentice, the sorceress Njib Abd-al-Hadi, crafted the cane to assist her aging mentor in continuing his work.

Though unremarkable in its form and design, the cane confers the ability to cast the following spells: *sanctuary* 1/week as a 12th-level cleric; *find traps* 2/day as a 12th-level cleric; and *feather fall* 4/day as 12th-level mage.

In addition, the staff creates a minor spacial fluctuation, allowing the user to cover distance twice as fast as normal. Unfortunately, the spell is as slow as Old Belipon was and can affect only walking speeds.

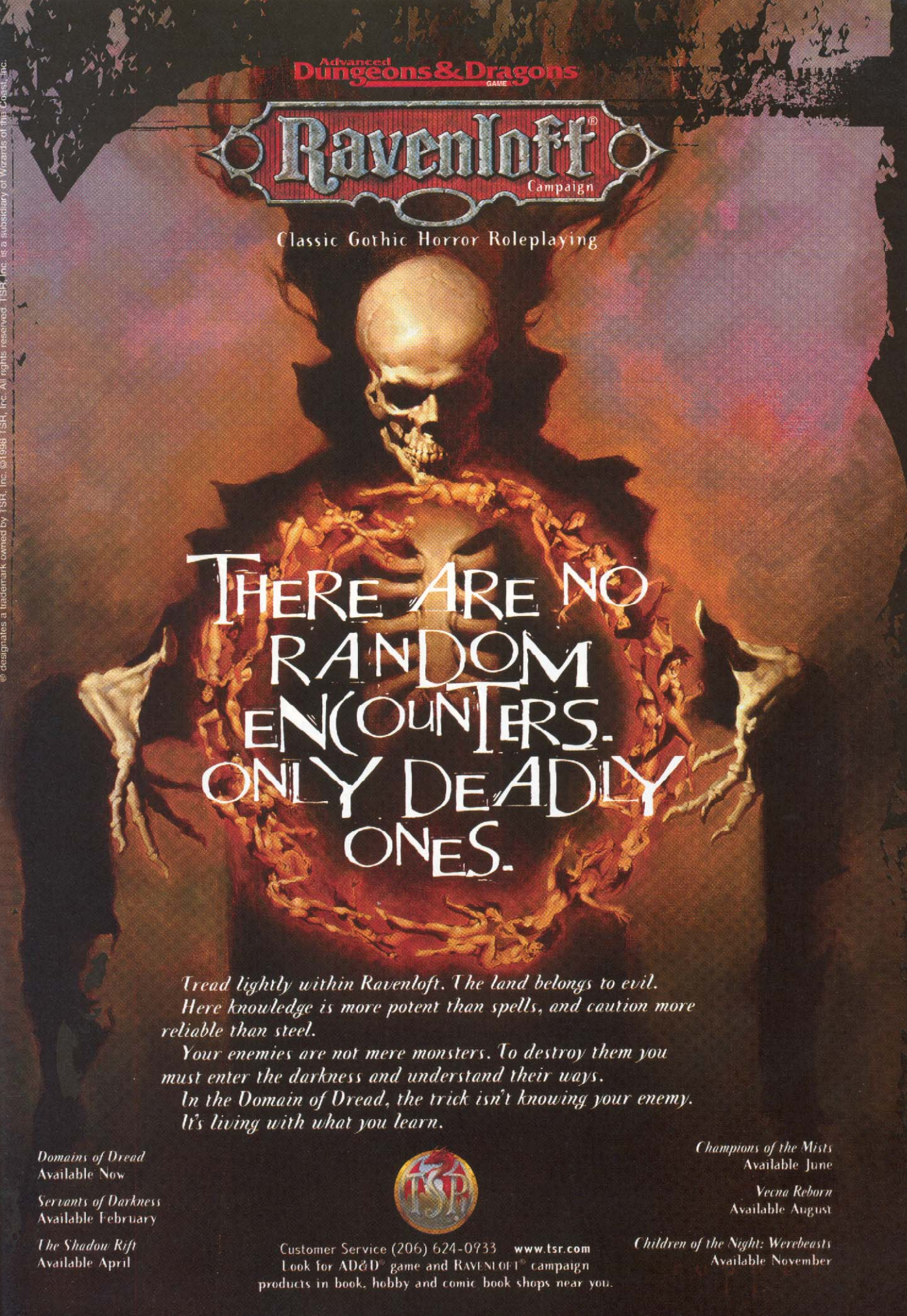
XP Value: 2,000 **GP Value:** 7,500

Parasol of the Night Fiend

This dainty parasol, a symbol of femininity and grace in the Renaissance Kingdoms, conceals a devilish shade of

darkness beneath its white silk and lace. The parasol is primarily coveted by evil creatures affected by sunlight (drow, vampires, etc.). Simply by grasping the handle, the bearer becomes immune to the sun's effects. Even in the direct light of day, the creature need only open and raise the small parasol above her head to escape pain or discomfort. The shade of darkness does exact a price. Under the protection of the parasol, the user loses all of her special abilities related to darkness (for example, drow lose infravision and vampires lose their exceptional strength and immortality) as well as any other particular weakness (silver, garlic, etc.).

Furthermore, the parasol makes it possible for the creature to walk upon consecrated ground. Touching the tip to the ground creates a temporary (1d3 turns) desecrated area five feet in diameter. Those creatures of good standing within the desecrated area act as if standing within the range of a *protection from good* spell.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Both of these effects can be disrupted by a *dispel magic* cast by a 7th-level or higher caster, but this does not affect the further functioning of the parasol.

XP Value: Nil **GP Value:** 9,000

Gloves of the Butler

This pair of stately white gloves radiates a faint aura of conjuration magic, but if worn they become normal gloves. When removed and invoked the gloves take on the powers of an unusually powerful *unseen servant*. The conjured servant performs all of the normal *unseen servant* abilities with double the effectiveness (range 60' radius, 40 lb. carried, 80 lb. pushed or pulled, 12 hp before dispelled), except for duration which is up to 24 hrs with a 4 hour recharge period. In addition to simple instructions, the gloves can perform

some complex tasks: specifically, cooking and serving an elegant meal, the mending and creation of tailored garments, and the driving of carriages.

XP Value: 1,500 **GP Value:** 7,500

Chaps of Riding

A pair of thick leather pants cut in the fringed style of the plains barbarians, these mystical garments appear weathered and saddle worn. Designed for guests of the horse tribes, these chaps grant comfort and ability to those foreign to the saddle. The chaps grant the wearer an innate riding ability (grants riding, land-based proficiency) and act as a *ring of warmth*, protecting the rider and mount (while riding) from the extreme cold of the plains. For skilled riders, these chaps grant a +1 bonus to all proficiency checks. In addition, the skilled rider and the affected mount are imbued with a greater vitality, allowing each to journey twice normal distance without ill effect.

XP Value: 1,250 **GP Value:** 4,000

Buttons of Repast

It has been said that the mind of a wizard is like fire, fueled by knowledge alone, but the wizard who designed these buttons knew the value of a full stomach. Two versions of these buttons are known to exist, the first of which is the least powerful, radiating only mild magic. Appearing as a small, plain brown button, it is activated by removing it from the cloth on which it is sewn. Once removed, the button becomes a full course meal complete with the appropriate wine and desert. The *major buttons of repast* are only found on opulent clothing and are ornate, oft times studded with small jewels or lined with precious metals. When detached, these buttons form a grand table set with food for twenty under a fine pavilion (50' × 40'). The pavilion acts as a *ring of warmth* would, but over the area of the pavilion. Both the plates on which the *minor button's* meal appears and the pavilion, table, chairs, plates, etc., of the *greater button* disappear after 12 hours.

Minor Button of Repast

XP Value: 500 **GP Value:** 1,500

Major Button of Repast

XP Value: 1,500 **GP Value:** 4,500

The Left Shoe

Said to be one of the deadliest weapons in modern warfare, *the left shoe* is a cursed item of many colors, literally. This piece of footwear, which radiates strong magic, takes on the shape and color of the nearest piece of footwear. It then proceeds to change the soles of all shoes within a 120-yard radius into left-footed versions (save vs. magic at –3). This affects all footwear, even footwear that traditionally is not "footed" such as slippers. *The left shoe* affects magical footwear and even footwear being worn at the time of activation. All shoes affected cannot be comfortably worn until recobbled. The devastating effect of this magical item has been felt by many a foot soldier in the Empire of the Eight Hills.

XP Value: 1,000 **GP Value:** 5,000

Besides their marriage contract, this article is Eric and Em's first collaboration. They hope to produce many more in the future. Articles, that is, not marriages.

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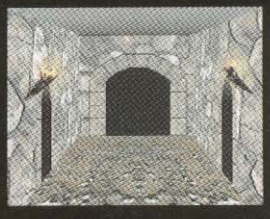
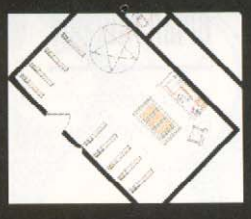




Picture This

Learn to establish atmosphere and setting at the beginning of each game session with a short DM's monologue.

by
Brian Murphy

illustrated by
David Kooharian

YOU ARE ABOUT TO START YOUR GAME SESSION, but there is a problem. While one player feasts on snacks, others debate the relative virtues of Marina Sirtis and Gillian Anderson or swap computer game tips. Faced with this real-world competition, attempts to plunge headlong into your game are doomed to failure. The change from real to imagined worlds is simply too abrupt. What you need is a transition to bridge the gap.

A short DM's monologue establishes setting and atmosphere instantly. It also signals to the players that the gameplay is about to begin.

Think of this monologue as the opening scene of a movie or novel. The aim is to introduce the best elements of your story and whet the appetite for future events.

There are many approaches that achieve this effect. Here are a few ideas.

Dateline

The Festival of Candles: Thorbardin. 1,000 leagues from the armies of darkness.

Datelines precisely establish a sense of time and place, instantly grounding your game in its setting.

They also reflect the viewpoint of your campaign world. Fundamentally, dating systems are named after the leadership of the time. It might be "the year of our lord," but who would your PCs consider that to be?

Consider these: "The 10,438th day in the reign of the Lich-Lord Azalin," or "Washington Slave Labor Camp 242, 11.23 Reichsfuhrstandart time." With one sentence you have introduced setting, atmosphere, and possible foe. Other examples of this technique appear in both the *Star Wars* and *Star Trek* preludes.

Contemporary datelines have a different effect by raising expectations that the rules of our world apply. Shattering these illusions, say by introducing a fantasy or horror element, is therefore all the more effective in its contrast. Your monstrosity is not just walking down any street. It is walking down *this* street, in *this* town, in the world *we* know. It bolsters your images from the realm of *could happen* to that of *is happening*. With the background sharply focused, so too are your NPCs. *The X-Files* uses this technique to great effect.

It is also worth noting the dramatic resonances that certain times and places carry (e.g., Roswell, New Mexico, 1948; Pearl Harbor, December 9, 1941). Even mundane locales, however, can be enhanced if they are linked to future game events. Consider: Nowhere USA (Invasion Objective Nine-Four-Niner) or Nowhere, USA, two days predetonation. Which invasion? Detonation of what? Your players have questions even before they begin.

Finally, by making time literally the first thing mentioned, you highlight its importance. Players start thinking in terms of deadlines and split-second operations. You've heightened the tension from the outset.

News Reports

Reports are coming in of heavy fighting on the lower east side. Details are sketchy, but witnesses describe assailants, and I quote, "stepping out of thin air ..."

News reports are another means of establishing the here and now. Future game events might be introduced as developing stories. The news reflects popular concerns. If the players' actions have serious repercussions, they should appear in the media. There is also the fame factor. Whether lionized as heroes or made the target of a police dragnet, the PCs are firmly at the center of events.

You can enhance atmosphere further by the way you report events. A world in which multiple deaths are treated as part of the traffic report is likely to be violent and callous. Non-stop propaganda indicates a world under a dictatorial regime.

AD&D® game worlds have their own means of spreading information. Town criers might proclaim the PCs' fame or noteriety, and messengers, be they mundane or magical, carry news far and wide. Among the aristocracy, court gossip is a rich source of facts (or lies depending on the teller) while the king would have the reports of his military scouts and royal spies to rely upon.

The PCs might feature in any of these situations, making each of them suitable for introductions.

Diary/Memoir Entries

"It seems strange to me now that those whom I sacrificed to the lords of the Demiplane of Dread once marked me as friend. But so, to my shame, it was."

This is an entirely personal view of the story's events made retrospectively. As such, the language used is more emotive, something that might prove misleading. Consider a diarist who describes his betrayal of the PCs or their deaths. The betrayal might only express his guilt for putting them in harm's way. Equally, their deaths may be an overwrought description of estrangement. What if the writer is deranged or lying to cover the PCs' escape?

Of course a diarist might really have betrayed the PCs. Regardless, the expectation introduced should increase the suspense, which is the whole point.

Keeping the identity of the diarist secret adds to the mystery. Players should wonder who, be it PC or NPC, knows so much about their exploits. It also prevents PCs, knowing that they survive to write a memoir, from guaranteeing their immortality. (Of course they might be writing their memoirs for a Tanar'ri lord in the realms of the dead). If you want to be really sneaky, the memoirs can be from different people for each new event. For an example of this tactic, see Bram Stoker's novel *Dracula*.

The Tale

"Peace all and hear my tale. The exploits of the Harpers have much to teach us. The tale of their victory at Zhentil Keep shows us that all is not as it first appears."

The older version of the memoir, drawn from spoken rather than written tradition, is the bard's tale. This strategy places the PCs as the audience of a fireside story.

You might begin your session with a specific phrase, such as: "This is the tale as it was told to me and as I shall tell it to you." Or a simple title might be given: "Hear now the tragedy of (PC's name) and weep."

This phrase should reflect both the storyteller and his audience. A court bard before his king and a grandfather telling ghost stories to his grandchildren would frame their tales very differently. By creating a simple background story you also add life to your introduction.

Choose your words carefully, though. The intro defines that evening's atmosphere. Players will draw different cues from the dread tale of Gilmorad than that of the peaceful respite at fair Gilmorad.

The effect is to nudge players in a certain direction by placing them in a particular mindset. The result is similar if you attach a moral to the tale. The intro above, for instance, would

prompt players to greater watchfulness.

Bard's tales are centered upon the famous. Your legendary PCs may therefore deserve a group name by which all know them. They might be the Warriors of Hope, the People's Champions, or the Noble Ones. This not only boosts the player's egos but prompts them to live up to their names. The most wayward group can thus be ushered to heroism.

Their title may also forewarn players of future plot directions. PCs named The Wanderers are not expect to settle down any time soon. This self-referential ploy is useful, however, once achieved. If you have a big set piece battle planned in a few weeks, spur the players on with dramatic hints. It builds their anticipation and suggests what is expected of them.

All know of the heroism of the Chosen at the Battle of the Forge but tonight I tell of their journey to its demesne.

Title Page

The Uncanny Alpha League lay strewn amidst the ruins of their base control room. Only one remains standing. And she cowers beneath the huge shadow of an oncoming foe.

Underneath the caption reads, "Shrike, Alone Against the Monolith."

Describing the cover of an imaginary book of the PCs' exploits works well for comic book or pulp campaigns.

Remember, though, covers were designed to capture the eye and the imagination, not religiously depict the book's contents. There is a long tradition of enlargement, exaggeration, and outright lies to rely upon should game events not occur as you predict.

Covers also effectively recap or foreshadow the plot. His appearance on the front cover suggests to players either that they still face Doctor X and his Uberbots or that they soon shall.

Finally, make use of the genre's more lurid elements (melodramatic captions, shadowy misproportioned figures, outrageous perils) tocapture the spirit.

The End Before the Beginning

"By the gods, the heat has melted their swords and armor both."

"That is not all, my lord. The clerics say that the bodies are of no Faerûnian race that they know."

Outlining the climax of a scenario before it starts might seem fraught with dangers of linearity. In fact, showing glimpses of the future can form the ultimate teaser. Recent cinematic examples include *The Usual Suspects (1997)* and *Bound (1998).*

Describe a situation where all seems lost, or perhaps the moment when the plot's twist is delivered. Players forewarned will try to avert the first and guess the latter, the roleplaying equivalent of a page-turner.

There are ways to lessen the constraints of a known future. You might have determined the PC's final destination but not how they reach it. Also, the situation might not be as it appears. The 'dead' PCs may be playing possum, alliances could be feigned, and many a villain has proclaimed victory moments before his plan unravels.

By establishing the barest bones, and blank appearance of the situation, you still give the PCs room to maneuver. Treat it as a close-up shot in a movie. You can see certain selected details but not the entire scene. When you describe a burning building, dwell on the danger, not which building it is.

This way, the players steel themselves for the inevitable, without knowing when they are about to meet their fate. In the above example, the first whiff of smoke confirms the players' worst fears, but by then it is too late. The suspense is thereby left intact.

Another method is to describe the aftermath of the PCs' adventures. Narrate NPCs searching the scene of the climactic battle. Perhaps palace guards (or another adventuring party) are trying to piece together events from bizarre evidence. Each week, the developing investigation brings new discoveries, and the PCs learn more of their eventual fate. And when the bodies are found, are they friend or foe, PC or NPC?

The Trial

"When exactly did you decide Lord Soames was the avatar of an alien god? Was it the moment you shot him with salt-filled bullets? Or was it earlier, as you surrounded his estate with elder signs?"

Question your players as if they were under scrutiny with you as interrogator. This may be as part of a trial, military tribunal, or even a psychiatric review. Forcing them to outline their actions in the previous session or describe their feelings toward other characters serves as an effective recap. Asking them what they did next gives you the first events for that night's gameplay.

Use loaded questions to pressure PCs. Players will be more reflective of their actions when they must justify them later.

PCs, being a self-important lot, automatically consider themselves the defendants in any trial. They might, however be witnesses to the crimes of others in defence or prosecution. Their true situation can be developed over the weeks by describing the courtroom, the advocates, and even the other witnesses.

Your AD&D world might have courtroom procedures radically different from our own. Think about how wizards, a knightly order, or even the thieves' guild might try one of their own. They could each have different ideas about how to find the truth. What about a system in which trial by combat is permitted, the PCs' testimony is subjected to magical scrutiny, or the forensic diabolist is called to give evidence?

Plot twists can be added if, for instance, a trusted ally delivers hostile testimony. What would make him change his allegiance so thoroughly? Or what if the witness is someone the players thought they had killed in the last episode? These are questions to answer during the game.

Non-fiction Pieces

"The Day of Silence marks King Fogren's terrible reign of the Southern Marches. Those outside the kingdom wonder if it is respect for the dead that fuels the practice or shame

that their murderer was never brought to the hanging tree."

These are the factual pieces that relate information about a particular element of the game world. For example a guidebook might describe the PCs' home city or the alien race they are about to meet. This gives players an indication of how their characters would see the world. Imagine your players primed with the above information when they meet the Knights of King Fogren. Players and characters both would have a strong reaction to those who venerate a long dead tyrant.

Factual need not mean dry and unemotional. Van Richten's guides to the denizens of the RAVENLOFT® setting provide dramatic examples whilst being full of information. Think also of *Star Trek's* "To boldly go" monologue. It sounds like a speech extract but certainly inspires the necessary mood. Similarly, the inauguration piece of your game world's leader might similarly be a libertarian call for unity or a hate-filled diatribe. Either says something about world and leader both.

Anything is grist for the mill if it reflects the setting. Historical essays, excerpts from training manuals, etiquette articles, advertisements for adventurers, spell descriptions, even cookbooks could reveal underlying attitudes beneath their facts.

Do not be afraid to salt these nonfiction pieces with clues for your players; or with complete red herrings or untruths. Just because someone has an opinion does not mean they are right. They might be out of date, wildly biased or simply lying.

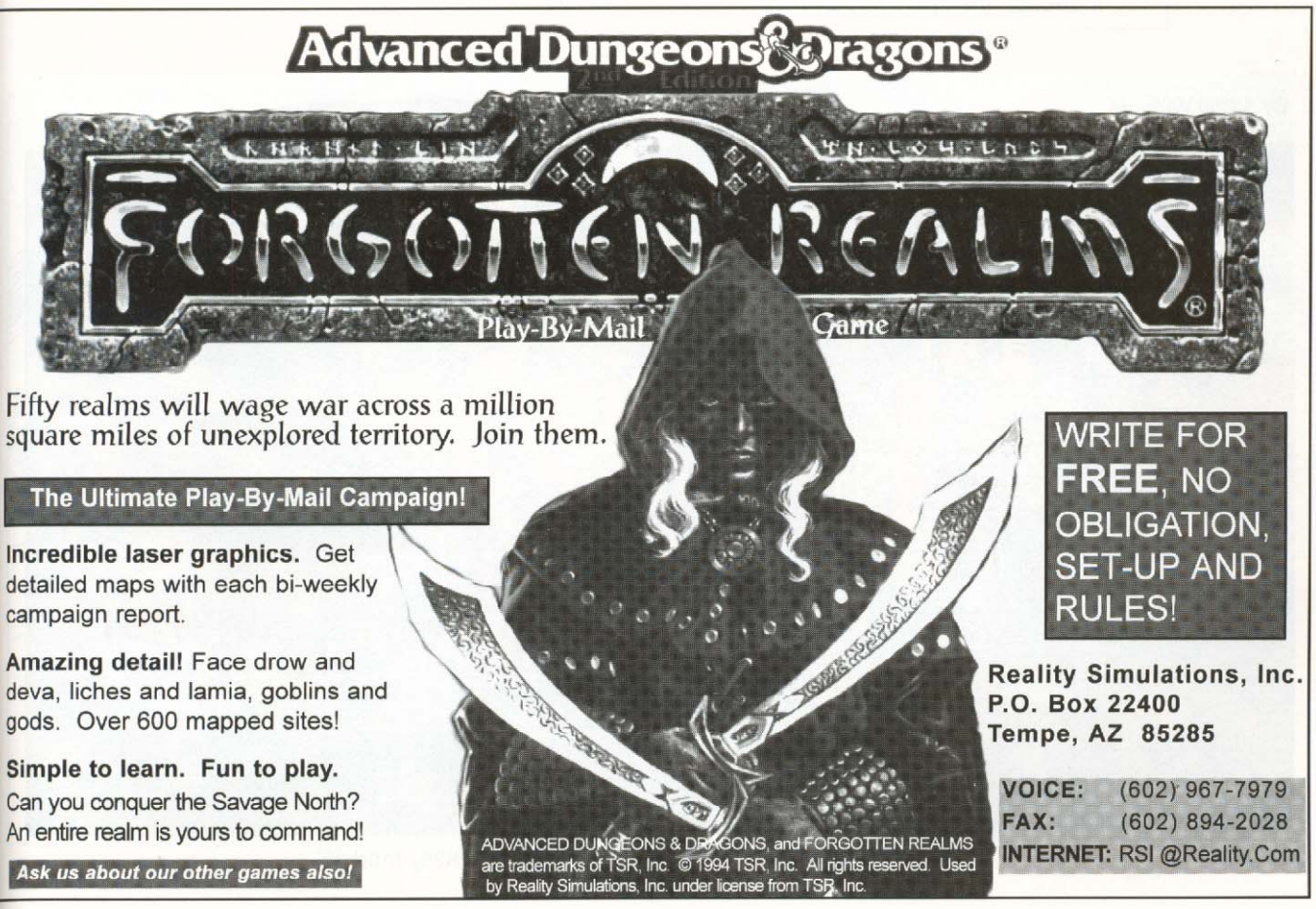
Epilogue

If your opening pieces have been successful, end your campaigns in the same fashion. Remember that your introductions raise questions; the epilogue should answer them. Give the verdict of your trial or a closing news piece that describes the effects of the player's actions. The players might even demand that you tie up the personal loose ends involved. I ran one campaign introducing each session as the tale told in a bard's contest. As the game ended, the players wanted to know whether the storyteller had won!

Do not miss the opportunity to foreshadow your next campaign. Do what you have done for each game session, but on a larger scale. Whet your players' appetites, and leave them with questions unanswered. They will hate you for it.

But that is another story.

Brian Murphy, from his home in Great Britain, is carefully plotting his next article for DRAGON® Magazine.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Dragon Mirth™

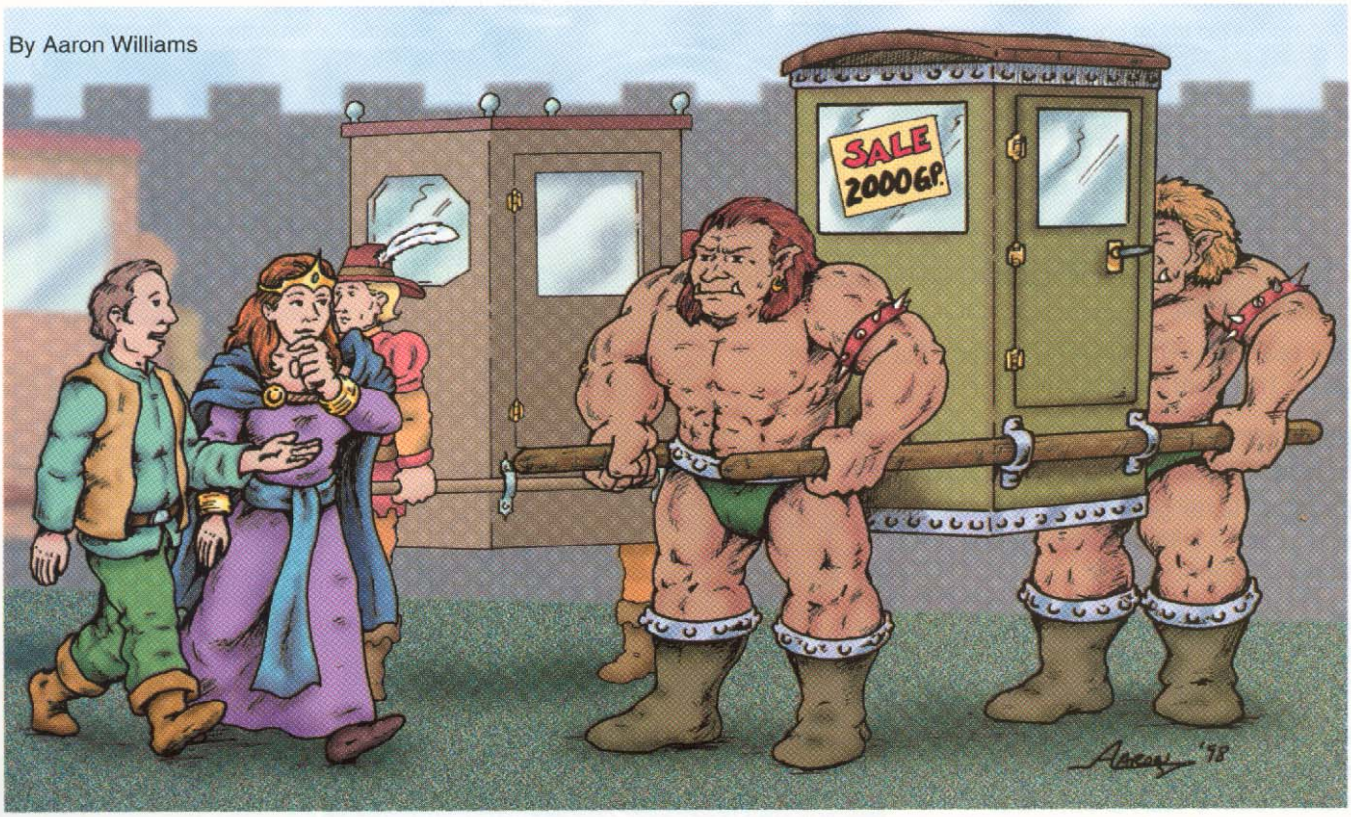
By Dwain Meyer

"There goes my pager again!"

By Rex F May

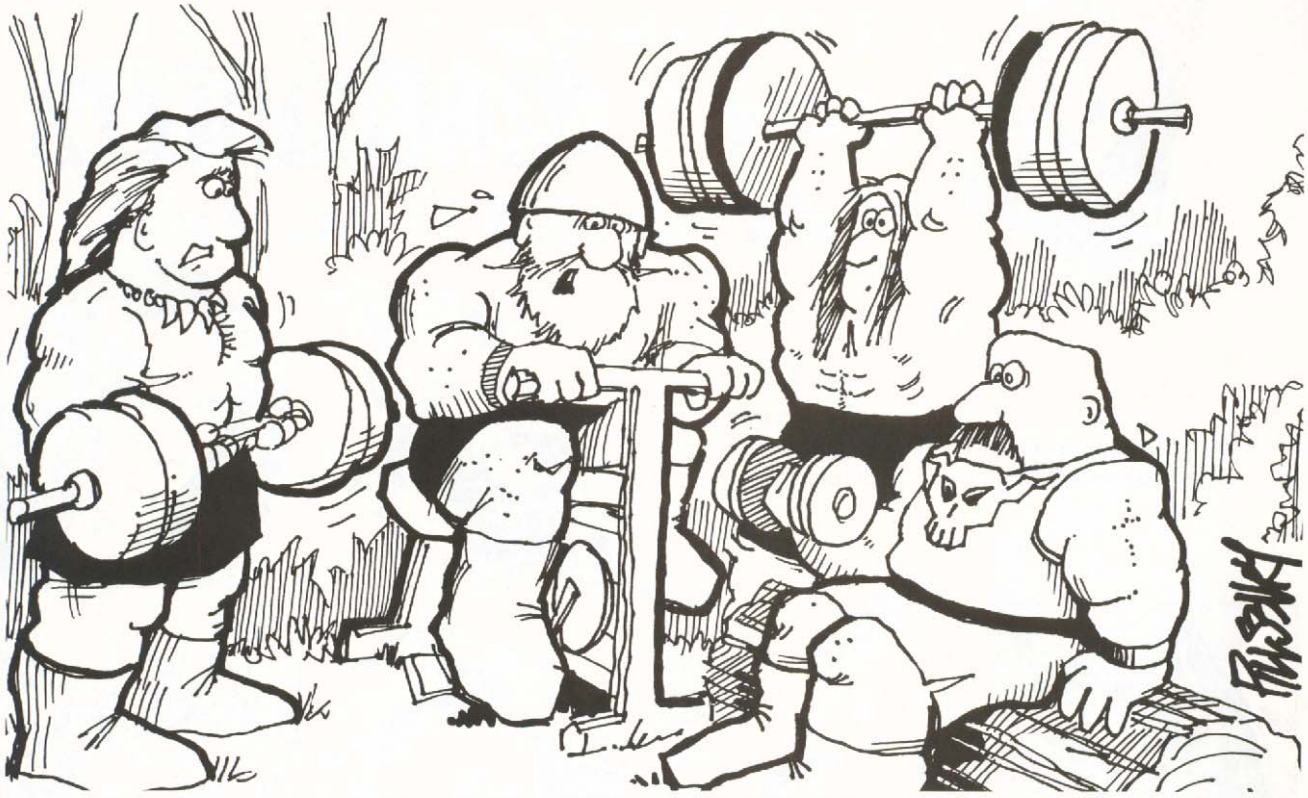
"It looks good to me, but we'd better run it through the spellchecker first."

By Aaron Williams



"Perhaps M'Lady would be interested in a sport utility model?"

By Joe Pillsbury



"I hear some people get the same results just by rolling dice!"

By Frank Gunter

"You got to admit, it does cheer up the battlefield!"

THE UNSPEAKABLE OAF by John Kovalic

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GOTTA PROWL. GOTTA SCRATCH. GOTTA PROWL. GOTTA SCRATCH...
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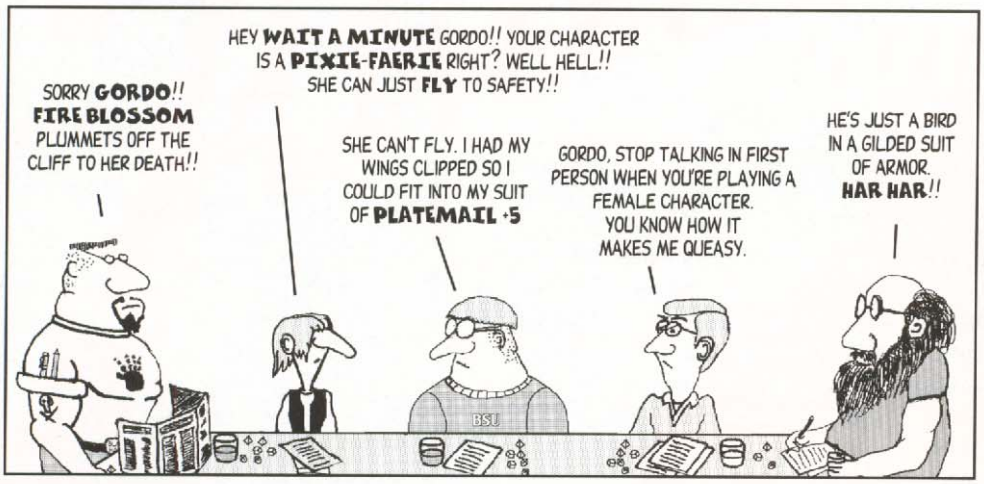
SORRY GORDO!! FIRE BLOSSOM PLUMMETS OFF THE CLIFF TO HER DEATH!!
HEY WAIT A MINUTE GORDO!! YOUR CHARACTER IS A PIXIE-FAERIE RIGHT? WELL HELL!! SHE CAN JUST FLY TO SAFETY!!
SHE CAN'T FLY. I HAD MY WINGS CLIPPED SO I COULD FIT INTO MY SUIT OF PLATEMAIL +5
GORDO, STOP TALKING IN FIRST PERSON WHEN YOU'RE PLAYING A FEMALE CHARACTER. YOU KNOW HOW IT MAKES ME QUEASY.
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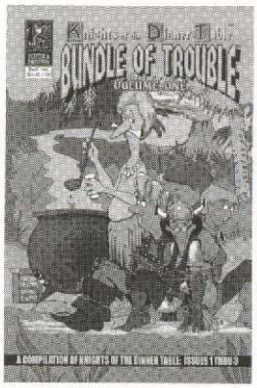

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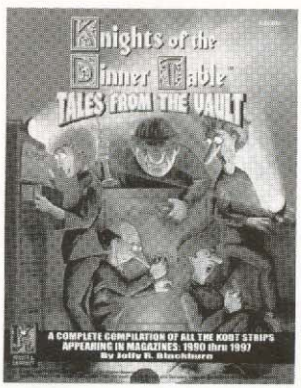
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Radisson Inn, Lebanon, NH. Events: miniatures, roleplaying, card games, board games, sanctioned Type II *Magic** tournament, *Puffing Billy** tournament, *L5R** sword tournament, LARP, *Warhammer**, *Starfleet Battles**, and more. For more information contact: Carnage at the Crossroads, R.F.D. #1 Box 592A, Windsor, VT 05089. Email: carnagecon@aol.com. Web: http://members.aol.com/carnagecon/index.htm.

Uni-Con'98

Nov. 13–15 MO

Joplin Holiday Inn, Joplin, MO. Artist Guest of Honor: Tina "NeNe" Thomas. Events: 24-hour gaming, RPGs, CCGs and LARPs. CCGs include sanctioned *Magic**, *Star Trek**, *Star Wars**, SPELLFIRE, *Highlander**, and others. Other events: art show and auction, charity auction to benefit Children's Miracle Network, 24-hr. big screen video room, dealer's room, panel discussions, miniature and model painting contests and more. Email timi@ipa.net. Website: ww.ipa.net/~timi.

Ellis Con X

Nov. 14 CT

H.H Ellis Tech, Danielson, CT. Events: one-day conference of military, political, and fantasy games. Including beginner games, miniatures, movies, and competition with prizes. The annual auction will be held at 5:00 PM. Registration is $5 at the door. For more information contact Ellis Tech. Simulations Club, 613 Upper Maple St., Danielson, CT 06239.

U Con

Nov. 20–22 MI

Michigan Union, Ann Arbor, MI. Guest of Honor: Jolly Blackburn, creator of *Knights of the Dinner Table**. Other Guests: Mark MacKinnon, creator of *Big Eyes Small Mouth*, and Professor M.A.R. Barker, creator of Tekumel (*Empire of the Petal Throne, Swords and Glory, Gardasiyal*) via speakerphone. Events: RPGA® Network games, live-action RPGs, a Tekumel gaming track, demos by Steve Jackson's Men in Black, a costume contest, special contests and door prizes related to U Con's 10th Anniversary, and the ever popular UCon auction. Contact UCon 1998, P.O. Box 4491, Ann Arbor, MI 48108. Website: http://www.deathstar.org/~ucon.

Convention Calendar Policies

This column is a service to our readers worldwide. Anyone may place a free listing for a game convention here, but the following guidelines must be observed.

In order to ensure that all convention listings contain accurate and timely information, all material should be either typed double-spaced or printed legibly on standard manuscript paper. The contents of each listing must be short and succinct.

The information given in the listing must include the following, in this order:

1. Convention title and dates held
2. Site and location
3. Guests of honor (if applicable)
4. Special events offered
5. Registration fees or attendance requirements, and,
6. Address(es) where additional information and confirmation can be obtained.

Convention flyers, newsletters, and other mass-mailed announcements will not be considered for use in this column; we prefer to see a cover letter with the announcement as well. No call-in listings are accepted. Unless stated otherwise, all dollar values given for U.S. and Canadian conventions are in U.S. currency.

Warning: We are not responsible for incorrect information sent to us by convention staff members. Please check your convention listing carefully! Accurate information is your responsibility.

Copy deadlines are the first Monday of each month, four months prior to the on sale date of an issue. Thus, the copy deadline for the December issue is the first Monday of September. Announcements for all conventions must be mailed to: "Conventions," *DRAGON® Magazine*, 1801 Lind Avenue S.W., Renton, WA, 98055, U.S.A.

If a convention listing must be changed because the convention has been cancelled, the dates have changed, or incorrect information has been printed, please contact us immediately. Most questions or changes should be directed to the magazine editors at (425) 254-2262 (U.S.A.).

Important: *DRAGON Magazine* does not publish phone numbers for conventions. Be certain that any address you send us is complete and correct.

To ensure that your convention listing makes it into our files, enclose a self-addressed stamped postcard with your first convention notice; we will return the card to show that it was received. You also might send a second notice one week after mailing the first. Mail your listing as early as possible, and always keep us informed of any changes. Please do not send convention notices by fax, as this method has not proven reliable.

❖ Australian convention
✻ Canadian convention
✪ European convention

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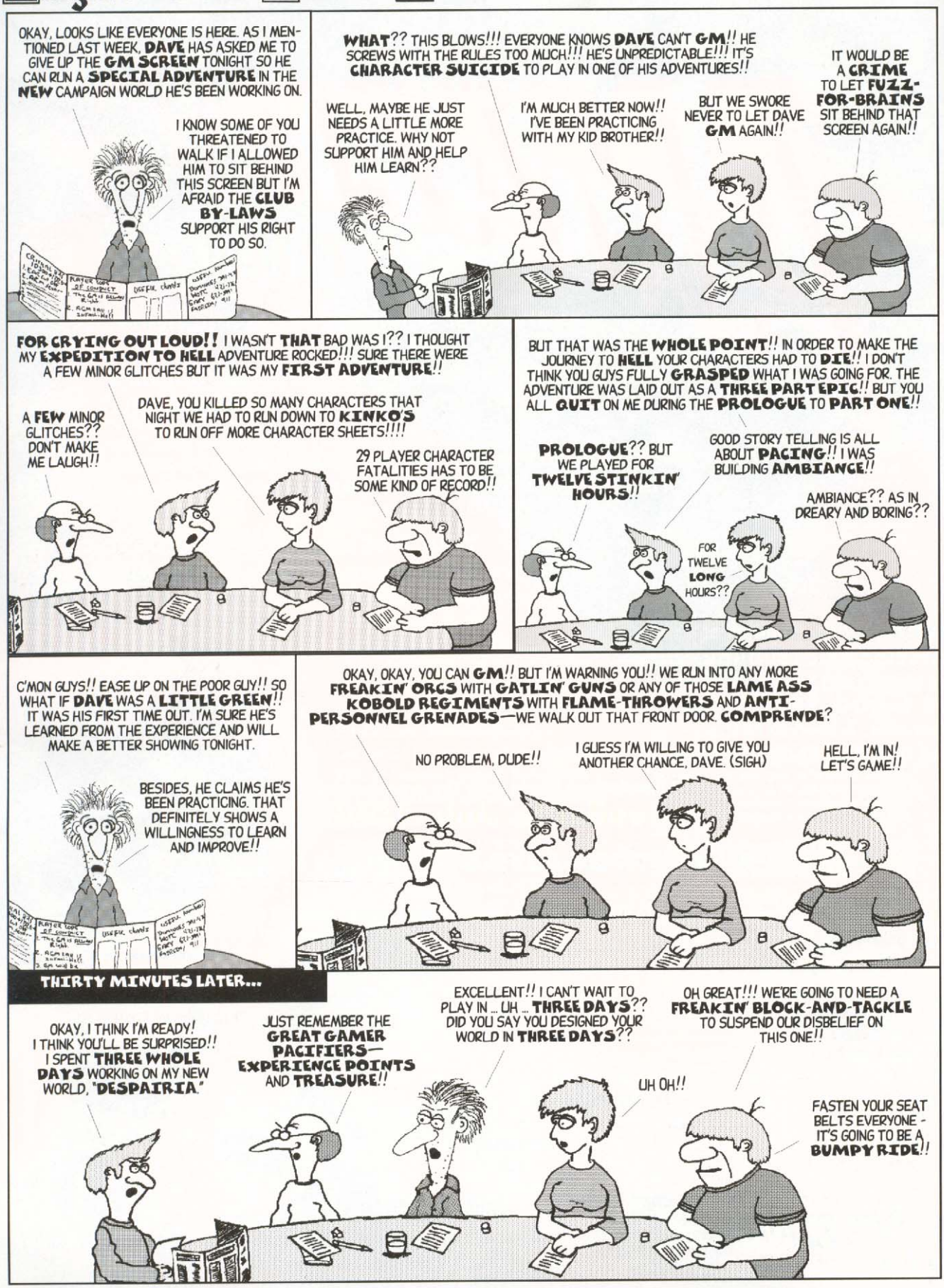
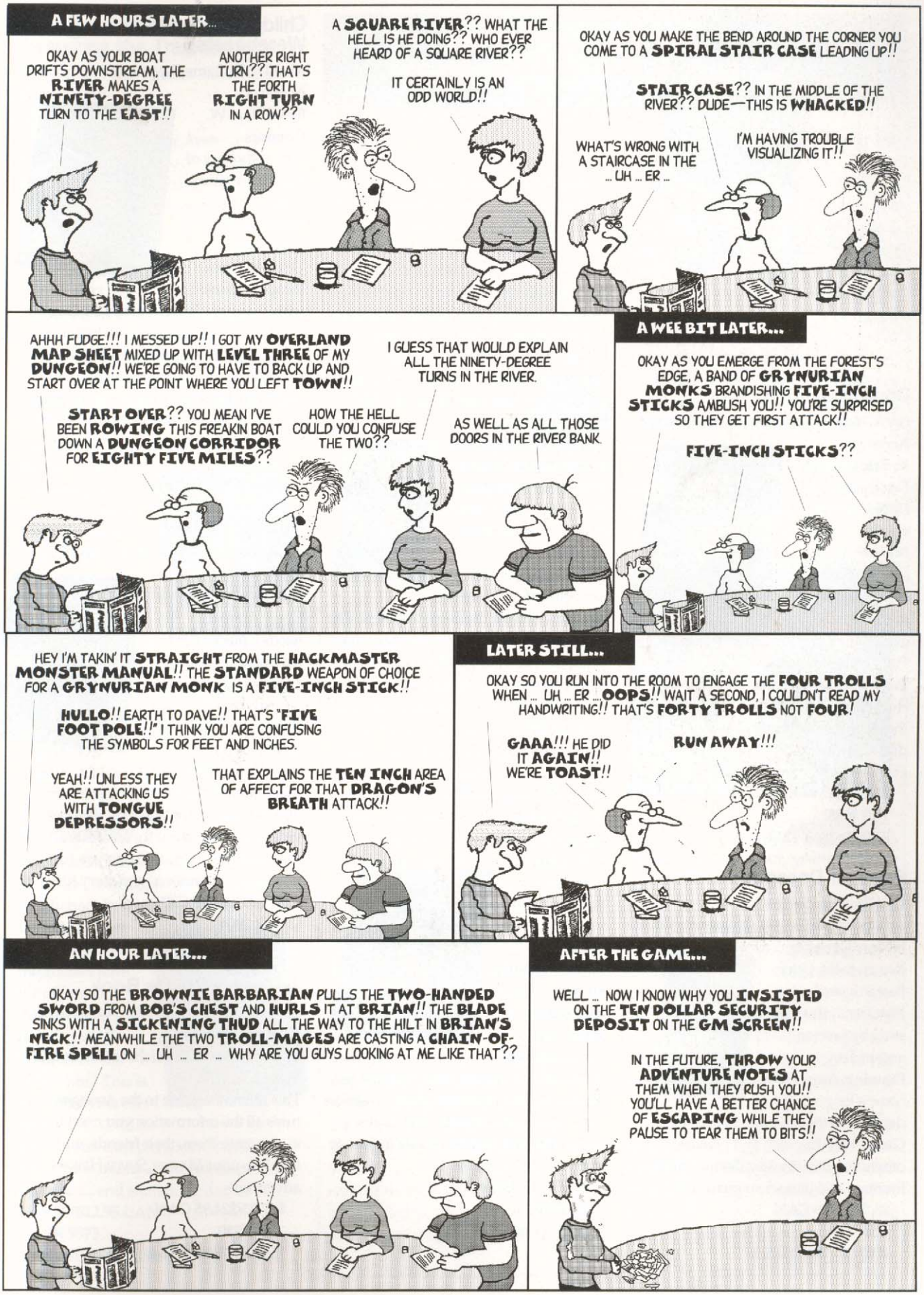
Knights of the Dinner Table

BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN


OKAY, LOOKS LIKE EVERYONE IS HERE. AS I MENTIONED LAST WEEK, DAVE HAS ASKED ME TO GIVE UP THE GM SCREEN TONIGHT SO HE CAN RUN A SPECIAL ADVENTURE IN THE NEW CAMPAIGN WORLD HE'S BEEN WORKING ON.
I KNOW SOME OF YOU THREATENED TO WALK IF I ALLOWED HIM TO SIT BEHIND THIS SCREEN BUT I'M AFRAID THE CLUB BY-LAWS SUPPORT HIS RIGHT TO DO SO.
WHAT?? THIS BLOWS!!! EVERYONE KNOWS DAVE CAN'T GM!! HE SCREWS WITH THE RULES TOO MUCH!!! HE'S UNPREDICTABLE!!! IT'S CHARACTER SUICIDE TO PLAY IN ONE OF HIS ADVENTURES!!
WELL, MAYBE HE JUST NEEDS A LITTLE MORE PRACTICE. WHY NOT SUPPORT HIM AND HELP HIM LEARN??
I'M MUCH BETTER NOW!! I'VE BEEN PRACTICING WITH MY KID BROTHER!!
BUT WE SWORE NEVER TO LET DAVE GM AGAIN!!
IT WOULD BE A CRIME TO LET FUZZ-FOR-BRAINS SIT BEHIND THAT SCREEN AGAIN!!
FOR CRYING OUT LOUD!! I WASN'T THAT BAD WAS I?? I THOUGHT MY EXPEDITION TO HELL ADVENTURE ROCKED!!! SURE THERE WERE A FEW MINOR GLITCHES BUT IT WAS MY FIRST ADVENTURE!!
A FEW MINOR GLITCHES?? DON'T MAKE ME LAUGH!!
DAVE, YOU KILLED SO MANY CHARACTERS THAT NIGHT WE HAD TO RUN DOWN TO KINKO'S TO RUN OFF MORE CHARACTER SHEETS!!!!
29 PLAYER CHARACTER FATALITIES HAS TO BE SOME KIND OF RECORD!!
BUT THAT WAS THE WHOLE POINT!! IN ORDER TO MAKE THE JOURNEY TO HELL YOUR CHARACTERS HAD TO DIE!! I DON'T THINK YOU GUYS FULLY GRASPED WHAT I WAS GOING FOR. THE ADVENTURE WAS LAID OUT AS A THREE PART EPIC!! BUT YOU ALL QUIT ON ME DURING THE PROLOGUE TO PART ONE!!
PROLOGUE?? BUT WE PLAYED FOR TWELVE STINKIN' HOURS!!
GOOD STORY TELLING IS ALL ABOUT PACING!! I WAS BUILDING AMBIANCE!!
AMBIANCE?? AS IN DREARY AND BORING??
FOR TWELVE LONG HOURS??
C'MON GUYS!! EASE UP ON THE POOR GUY!! SO WHAT IF DAVE WAS A LITTLE GREEN!! IT WAS HIS FIRST TIME OUT. I'M SURE HE'S LEARNED FROM THE EXPERIENCE AND WILL MAKE A BETTER SHOWING TONIGHT.
BESIDES, HE CLAIMS HE'S BEEN PRACTICING. THAT DEFINITELY SHOWS A WILLINGNESS TO LEARN AND IMPROVE!!
OKAY, OKAY, YOU CAN GM!! BUT I'M WARNING YOU!! WE RUN INTO ANY MORE FREAKIN' ORCS WITH GATLIN' GUNS OR ANY OF THOSE LAME ASS KOBOLD REGIMENTS WITH FLAME-THROWERS AND ANTI-PERSONNEL GRENADES—WE WALK OUT THAT FRONT DOOR. COMPRENDE?
NO PROBLEM, DUDE!!
I GUESS I'M WILLING TO GIVE YOU ANOTHER CHANCE, DAVE. (SIGH)
HELL, I'M IN! LET'S GAME!!
THIRTY MINUTES LATER...
OKAY, I THINK I'M READY! I THINK YOU'LL BE SURPRISED!! I SPENT THREE WHOLE DAYS WORKING ON MY NEW WORLD, "DESPAIRIA."
JUST REMEMBER THE GREAT GAMER PACIFIERS— EXPERIENCE POINTS AND TREASURE!!
EXCELLENT!! I CAN'T WAIT TO PLAY IN ... UH ... THREE DAYS?? DID YOU SAY YOU DESIGNED YOUR WORLD IN THREE DAYS??
OH GREAT!!! WE'RE GOING TO NEED A FREAKIN' BLOCK-AND-TACKLE TO SUSPEND OUR DISBELIEF ON THIS ONE!!
UH OH!!
FASTEN YOUR SEAT BELTS EVERYONE - IT'S GOING TO BE A BUMPY RIDE!!


A FEW HOURS LATER...
OKAY AS YOUR BOAT DRIFTS DOWNSTREAM, THE RIVER MAKES A NINETY-DEGREE TURN TO THE EAST!!
ANOTHER RIGHT TURN?? THAT'S THE FORTH RIGHT TURN IN A ROW??
A SQUARE RIVER?? WHAT THE HELL IS HE DOING?? WHO EVER HEARD OF A SQUARE RIVER??
IT CERTAINLY IS AN ODD WORLD!!
OKAY AS YOU MAKE THE BEND AROUND THE CORNER YOU COME TO A SPIRAL STAIR CASE LEADING UP!!
STAIR CASE?? IN THE MIDDLE OF THE RIVER?? DUDE—THIS IS WHACKED!!
WHAT'S WRONG WITH A STAIRCASE IN THE ... UH ... ER ...
I'M HAVING TROUBLE VISUALIZING IT!!
AHHH FUDGE!!! I MESSED UP!! I GOT MY OVERLAND MAP SHEET MIXED UP WITH LEVEL THREE OF MY DUNGEON!! WE'RE GOING TO HAVE TO BACK UP AND START OVER AT THE POINT WHERE YOU LEFT TOWN!!
START OVER?? YOU MEAN I'VE BEEN ROWING THIS FREAKIN BOAT DOWN A DUNGEON CORRIDOR FOR EIGHTY FIVE MILES??
HOW THE HELL COULD YOU CONFUSE THE TWO??
I GUESS THAT WOULD EXPLAIN ALL THE NINETY-DEGREE TURNS IN THE RIVER.
AS WELL AS ALL THOSE DOORS IN THE RIVER BANK.
A WEE BIT LATER...
OKAY AS YOU EMERGE FROM THE FOREST'S EDGE, A BAND OF GRYNURIAN MONKS BRANDISHING FIVE-INCH STICKS AMBUSH YOU!! YOU'RE SURPRISED SO THEY GET FIRST ATTACK!!
FIVE-INCH STICKS??
HEY I'M TAKIN' IT STRAIGHT FROM THE HACKMASTER MONSTER MANUAL!! THE STANDARD WEAPON OF CHOICE FOR A GRYNURIAN MONK IS A FIVE-INCH STICK!!
HULLO!! EARTH TO DAVE!! THAT'S "FIVE FOOT POLE!!" I THINK YOU ARE CONFUSING THE SYMBOLS FOR FEET AND INCHES.
YEAH!! UNLESS THEY ARE ATTACKING US WITH TONGUE DEPRESSORS!!
THAT EXPLAINS THE TEN INCH AREA OF AFFECT FOR THAT DRAGON'S BREATH ATTACK!!
LATER STILL...
OKAY SO YOU RUN INTO THE ROOM TO ENGAGE THE FOUR TROLLS WHEN ... UH ... ER ... OOPS!! WAIT A SECOND, I COULDN'T READ MY HANDWRITING!! THAT'S FORTY TROLLS NOT FOUR!
GAAA!!! HE DID IT AGAIN!! WE'RE TOAST!!
RUN AWAY!!!
AN HOUR LATER...
OKAY SO THE BROWNIE BARBARIAN PULLS THE TWO-HANDED SWORD FROM BOB'S CHEST AND HURLS IT AT BRIAN!! THE BLADE SINKS WITH A SICKENING THUD ALL THE WAY TO THE HILT IN BRIAN'S NECK!! MEANWHILE THE TWO TROLL-MAGES ARE CASTING A CHAIN-OF-FIRE SPELL ON ... UH ... ER ... WHY ARE YOU GUYS LOOKING AT ME LIKE THAT??
AFTER THE GAME...
WELL ... NOW I KNOW WHY YOU INSISTED ON THE TEN DOLLAR SECURITY DEPOSIT ON THE GM SCREEN!!
IN THE FUTURE, THROW YOUR ADVENTURE NOTES AT THEM WHEN THEY RUSH YOU!! YOU'LL HAVE A BETTER CHANCE OF ESCAPING WHILE THEY PAUSE TO TEAR THEM TO BITS!!

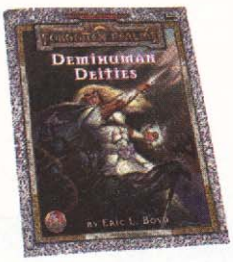
KNIGHTS OF THE DINNER TABLE™ © KENZERCO 1998 SEND STORY IDEAS TO JOLLYRB@AOL.COM OR KODT, 1003 MONROE PIKE, MARION IN 46953

Previews

NEW FOR NOVEMBER

Demihuman Deities

An AD&D® Game FORGOTTEN REALMS® Accessory
By Eric L. Boyd

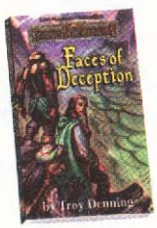


Demihuman Deities, the final volume in the *Faiths & Avatars* series, features complete information for the deities of all major demihuman races. Full details on the individual deities, their churches, specialty priests, and church-specific spells are included for the elf, dwarf, halfling, gnome, and drow pantheons in the FORGOTTEN REALMS setting.

$24.95/$32.95 CAN
TSR 9585
ISBN 0-7869-1239-1

Faces of Deception

Lost Empires Series
A FORGOTTEN REALMS Paperback Novel,
By Troy Denning



Return to the Utter East in a new FORGOTTEN REALMS story by veteran author Troy Denning. Atreus has come a long way to drink from the Fountain of Infinite Grace. Will the greed and prejudice of others stand in his way, destroying the fountain and its ancient guardians?

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The Doomgrinder

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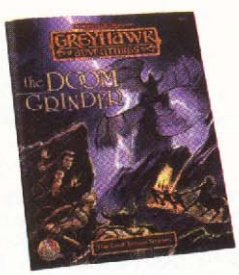

In the third adventure in the Lost Tombs series, the arms of the monstrous windmill known as The Doomgrinder stand one degree short of the zenith—an omen predicting doom for the city of Greyhawk. Derro warriors have been spotted in the Cairn Hills. Can you discover their secrets in time to avert the prophecy?

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Children of the Night: Werebeasts

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This anthology of short adventures is third in the Children of the Night series. Thirteen lycanthropes—cursed with changing forms and the madness of bloodlust—are featured with histories, roleplaying strategies, and adventures created specifically for them. All play well both as stand-alone adventures and as parts of larger campaigns.

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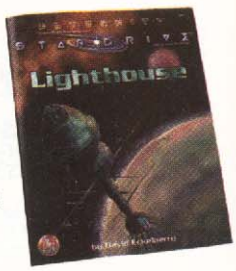
An ALTERNITY® Game STAR*DRIVE™ Accessory
By David Eckelberry



Every campaign needs a place where heroes can rest, buy supplies, catch the latest rumors, and secure training or employment. For the STAR*DRIVE campaign, that place is the *Lighthouse*, a starfaring outpost that roams the Verge and provides a starting point for adventure. Included are maps, ready-to-use supporting cast members, and story ideas.

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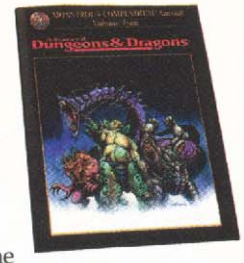
NEW FOR DECEMBER

MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM® Annual, Volume 4

An AD&D Game Accessory
By TSR Staff



Populate your world with more nasty creatures! This fourth installment of the *MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM Annual* contains the best monster entries from accessories, adventures, and boxed sets produced during the year.

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By Michael D. Wagner

Buried for more than a century, the ancient temple of Bundushatur has resurfaced. What lurks within its catacombs? This is a setting in the classic style of AD&D adventures. Intrepid adventurers can explore the musty corridors, discovering treasure ... and something darker.

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TSR NEWS

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LARP Playtest

This year's GEN CON® Game Fair featured the first official playtest of TSR's initial entry into the Live Action Role Playing (LARP) genre. For those who weren't able to attend this somewhat chaotic event, here's a brief glimpse of what you missed.

The basic scenario, supplied by veteran LARP player and game designer Jason Carl, involved a gathering of heroes to compete in a series of tournaments. The winner would be named heir to throne and rewarded with the hand of the prince (or princess). The whole thing was set against the backdrop of a looming war and seasoned with an assassination plot.

In order to make the event accessible to those with little or no LARP experience, the playtest adventure focused on groups of eight or ten. However, we wanted to make sure experienced LARPers would enjoy the game as much as the newcomers, so the scenario also allowed for lots of roleplaying and plenty of mystery. The participants were organized into teams according to their level of LARP experience. If the new players were stumped by the affair or the veterans were bored to tears, we wanted to know! (Happily, all groups seemed to enjoy both the rules and the storyline.)

Over the course of the weekend, we ran several sessions of the playtest. The first thing we learned was the oldest lesson in gaming: Expect the unexpected. Perhaps the best example of this credo occurred when the noble dwarf ambassador at court jury-rigged an explosive device using gunpowder, nails, and a Viking drinking horn. Although the resulting blast didn't kill any heroes, it did bring about an unexpected alliance between—believe it or not—the elves and orcs.

The playtests were run by a group of volunteers headed by game designer and LARPer Nicky Rea and her dedicated staff (Jackie Cassada, Carla

At this year's Game Fair, LARP game designer Bill Connors plays the court fool to Bard Dolorin (James Wesley) and dwarven Ambassador Stonehammer (Will Bainsbridge).

Hollar, Andie McDivitt, and Tadd McDivitt). Thanks to them, the members of the TSR team—including game designer William W. Connors and editor Penny Williams, with help from editor Miranda Horner and brand manager Sue Cook—could step back and watch from a distance, taking notes on the players' reactions and opinions.

Plans for the product involve a brief set of rules and three self-contained scenarios suitable for small groups. Look for this as-yet untitled release next year. Meanwhile, watch these pages for news as development progresses!

Continued on page 117

Coming Attractions

Cover by Jeff Easley

The Bigger They Are ...

By Skip Williams

When you need big help, who're you going to call? A selection of extra-large NPCs, along with rules on the care and feeding of your giant.

... The Harder They Fall

By Paul F. Culotta

Giants can mean big trouble, but not if you approach the problem the right way. Two articles in one: The first shows the DM how to challenge the PCs with giant foes; the second shows the PCs how to fight back.

Ecology of the Cyclopskin

By Johnathan Richards

What do cyclopskin have to do with beholders? Find out in this insightful study of the one-eyed giants.

Arthur's Final Morn

Fiction by J. Robert King

After the battle of Camlaun, wither the once and future king? Merlin knows, and now he reveals the secret to his dying king.

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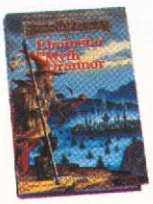
Elminster in Myth Drannor

A FORGOTTEN REALMS Paperback Novel

By Ed Greenwood



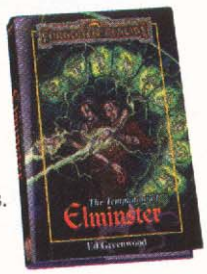
Elminster in Myth Drannor, now in paperback, is the sequel to the best-selling *Elminster: The Making of a Mage*. To learn about elven ways and magic, young Elminster travels to Cormanthyr, where political intrigue and otherworldly sorceries abound.

$5.99/$6.99 CAN
TSR 8575P
ISBN 0-7869-1190-5

The Temptation of Elminster

A FORGOTTEN REALMS Hardcover Novel

By Ed Greenwood



The saga of the young Elminster continues! Myth Drannor has fallen, and glorious Cormanthyr lies in ruins. Elminster emerges from the rubble to serve new, human masters. Will the price of wizardly power be the young mage's very soul?

$21.99/$28.99 CAN
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The Inner Planes

An AD&D Game PLANESCAPE® Accessory

By Monte Cook with William W. Connors

Of all the planes in the multiverse, none are as hostile to mortal life as the Inner Planes. From Fire to Water, Ooze to Ice, Lightning to Ash, they spring from the basic elements, from energy itself. This campaign expansion, with an accompanying adventure, tests your survival skills, revealing secrets of the Inner Planes sure to startle even the most jaded explorer.

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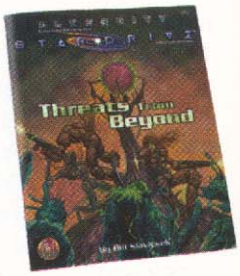
Threats from Beyond

An ALTERNITY Game STAR*DRIVE Accessory

By Bill Slavicsek



Threats from Beyond reveals details of the emerging alien menace known as the Externals. These unfathomable creatures have begun an invasion that could result in the end of human history—unless heroes of the STAR*DRIVE campaign step forward to stop them. Includes guidelines for using this material to expand existing campaigns.

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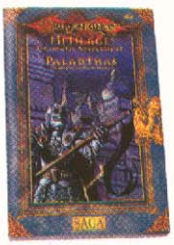
Palanthas

A DRAGONLANCE: FIFTH AGE® Dramatic Supplement

By Steven "Stan!" Brown



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The Dungeon Delve

To showcase the AD&D game at this year's Game Fair, the TSR creative staff assembled a new event called the Dungeon Delve. Hundreds of players entered the Dungeon Delve from Thursday morning to Sunday afternoon. Two different parties of eight PCs could explore the dungeon at any time (and could even meet while exploring).

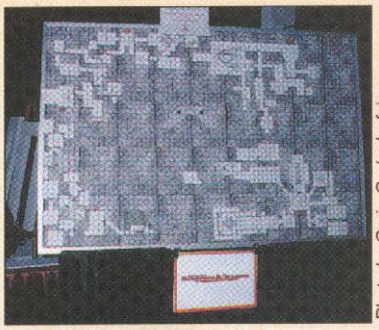

Photo by Craig Cudnohufsky

The Tavern Map revealed more and more rooms as the dungeon claimed more and more victims.

Two hundred years ago, twin wizards created a great underground fortress, sealing it with impenetrable protective spells. The wizards passed from this plane, but their dungeon remained. Recent expeditions discovered that the protective spells had weakened. Suddenly, delvers could enter the complex for a short time, searching for ancient treasure before the wards transported them back out of the dungeon. The Delver's Guild organized teams to explore this ancient complex. The explorers could, of course, keep any treasure they found.

As parties returned, a huge, ever-changing map was posted on a board near the "tavern," where adventuring groups assembled to plan their forays. Red pins marked where brave adventurers had fallen. (Slain adventurers' names and epitaphs were added to the "Role of the Honored Dead"—a list 104 names long by the end.) As the convention progressed, people learned that multiple red pins indicated particularly dangerous areas, such as The Tower (which claimed well over two dozen victims) and the Dark Temple.

On Sunday, after passing through many traps, monsters, and barriers, adventurers discovered a powerful dragon at the center of the dungeon. Two groups joined forces to assault the beast's lair, over many fallen bodies of those who had come before. The victorious players included John Hanna, Dan O'Connor, David Brooks, Gregory Brooks, Nick Falk, Michael Bachmann, Eric Merlin, Dave Dallmann, Rob Tillich, Ryan Tillich, Jason Hohm, Josh Druhn and John Mangrum.

There are rumors of a second level to this colossal dungeon. Could there be more? Only those attending the 1999 GEN CON Game Fair will know for sure.

Todd Lockwood's 1997 "Black Dragon" won the Chesley for best magazine cover.

Lockwood Wins the Chesley

TSR's own Todd Lockwood scored when the Association of Science Fiction and Fantasy Artists presented the 13th Annual Chesley Awards on August 6. Todd took home the prize for the best magazine cover of the year. Other winners included Michael Dashow for best paperback; Alan Lee for best interior illustrations; Bob Eggleton for best hardcover; and Vincent DiFate for artistic achievement.

The Chesley, named for the great astronomical artist Chesley Bonestell, was started by the ASFA in 1985 as a means for the SF and fantasy art community to recognize individual works and achievements during a given year.

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Cover by Tony DiTerlizzi

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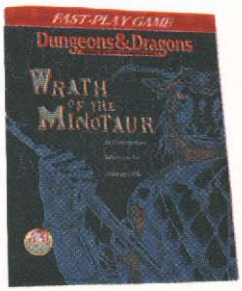

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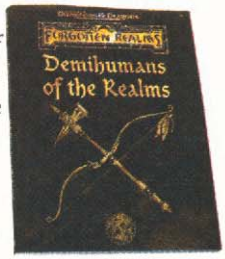

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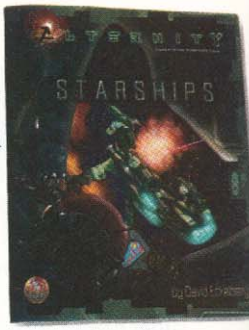

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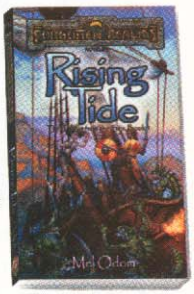

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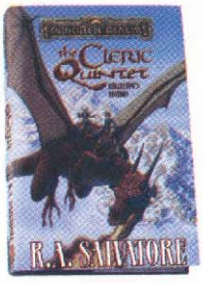
A FORGOTTEN REALMS Hardcover Novel
By R.A. Salvatore



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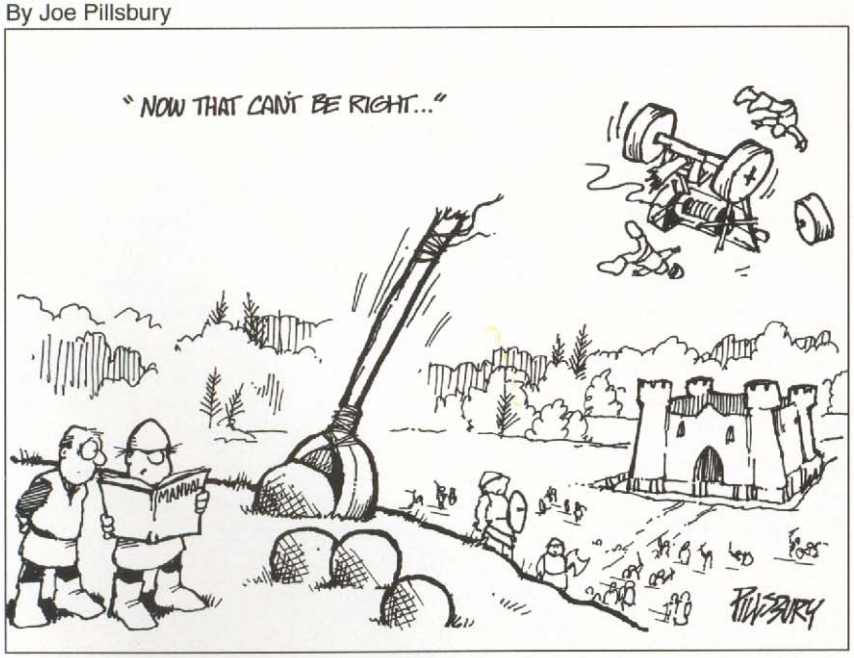
By Joe Pillsbury



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JOLLY BLACKBURN

The creator of *Knights of the Dinner Table* just might have a secret camera in *your* gaming room.

by Allen Varney

In college, Jolly Blackburn majored in anthropology, history, and classical cultures, disciplines that require skillful observation of strange practices. With his comic strip *Knights of the Dinner Table*, Blackburn turns his penetrating gaze to the bizarre rites of that exotic tribe, gamers.

Debuting in the gaming magazine *Shadis* (which Blackburn founded), *KoDT* came to *DRAGON® Magazine* with issue #226 and rapidly became the most popular strip in recent history. "Over the years I've often wondered just what it is about *KoDT* that causes all the fuss," says Blackburn. "I'm the first to look at the typical strip and say, 'It's not *all* that!' It's poorly drawn. The punchlines aren't always funny. I think it goes back to all those letters about the hidden camera."

One phrase recurs with spooky frequency in *KoDT* fan letters: "Jolly must have a hidden camera in my gameroom." A creepy notion, given that the Knights can spend eight hours randomly killing a town's stray animals, slaughter every citizen in Desert Gorge while trying to rob its bank, and negotiate "equitable experience points" contracts with the gamemaster. Better than ever before, *KoDT* may show us the true state of gaming—brrr!

Blackburn, now 39, conceived his strip in 1990 as part of his larger creation, *Shadis*. "I launched *Shadis* and Alderac Entertainment Group while still in the Army. (Alderac, by the way, is the name of my AD&D® campaign world.) I had been a great fan of J.D. Webster's *Fineous Fingers* from the early *DRAGON Magazine*, and I wanted something similar. Unfortunately, I couldn't find anyone willing to do a strip. Finally I sat down and drew out a very crude cartoon showing a gamemaster and a player sitting around a table arguing over a rules call."

With an anthropologist's eye, Blackburn based the *KoDT* characters on friends and fellow players—and, in one case, on himself. "B.A. Felton, the gamemaster, is one of those guys who just lives to GM. He likes the power that comes with the screen, and he likes to tell a story. The problem is that he feels the players are the *enemy*, constantly ruining his 'finely crafted' adventures."

As for the rest: "Bob Herzog is a hack-n-slasher through and through. He just wants to kill things. One of his favorite sayings is, 'Yeah, yeah, enough flavor text. How many experience points did I get?'

"Dave Bozwell is a hack-n-slasher too, but he's also a follower. He usually goes along with whatever Bob wants to do. He's famous for his *HackMaster +12* and likes having the 'baddest weapon' in the book.

"Sara Felton was added to the group after so many fans wrote in to ask, 'Where's the female gamer?' She turned out to be a key figure. Every comedy act needs a straight man (er … woman).

"Brian VanHoose is the ultimate rules-lawyer. He has to have the last word on everything. He's every GM's worst nightmare. Make a bad call, and Brian is going to call you on it."

Alderac published three issues of a *KoDT* comic (1994–95) before Blackburn left the company. "I soon became aware that the demand for *KoDT* was much higher than I had ever realized. That got me thinking about doing it on a monthly schedule. I had made friends with the folks at Kenzer & Company while I was at *Shadis*. We discovered we had so much in common, I decided to come aboard and throw my intellectual properties in the kitty. I'm now a major shareholder."

Blackburn hopes to take charge of Kenzer's *Kingdom of Kalamar* fantasy campaign setting—but for now, the Knights are keeping him busy.

Though anthropologists frown on collaborating with their subjects, Blackburn gets many *KoDT* ideas from his fans. "Almost every idea submitted has something in it I can lift and use. Every idea gets printed out and shoved in a huge binder. I'll periodically pull it down and flip through it.

"In my cultural anthropology classes they taught us to 'shut up and observe.' Whenever I go to a convention and find myself around fellow gamers, I love to listen. I've gotten to the point where I can't go anywhere if I don't have a pen and notepad, because I'm afraid I'll hear something I can use."

R. A. SALVATORE

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